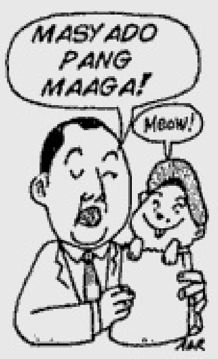
Gloria flies to Japan on 5-day working visit

STORY ON PAGE A3

A matter of timing?


MASYADO PANG MAAGA!
Meow!

By C. Pablo and C. Avendaño

THE PRESIDENT "isn't letting the cat out of the bag yet," presidential political adviser Joey Rufino has said. Maybe, but in the meantime the meowing has only become louder.

A MATTER/ A20

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- **SSS funds running out in 10 years** BUSINESS / B1
- **Bomb found in gym** ACROSS / A16
- **US sees 'enhanced' al-Qaida threat** WORLD / A11

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Veterans denounce P1.3B in anomalies

'Reformist' group files landmark case in court

By John Nery

(First of two parts)

IT is the saddest kind of war: grandfather against grandfather, veteran against veteran, fighting over the fate of other old warriors who fade away like the old soldier of yore—at the rate of 19 deaths a day.

WAR OF THE VETS
An I-TEAM Report

The casus belli is at least P1.3 billion in allegedly anomalous transactions, but what is truly at stake is nothing less than the future of the nation's veterans organizations, including the most liquid local bank in the Philippines.

These organizations minister to the needs of over 320,000 veterans or their heirs, many of whom are as desperate as a soldier in the trenches.

"Very unfortunate. We have been hoodwinked up to the twilight of our life. We were hoodwinked by De Ocampo—one man with an evil purpose," says Col. Charlie Beloso, 83.

He is talking of Emmanuel de Ocampo, 79, president of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines (VFP) for the last 16 years but at its helm, Beloso says, for the last 36 years.

Beloso leads a group of veterans and their dependents and associates called the Crusade to Reform Veteran Organizations, or Crevo, who allege that De Ocampo, in his triple capacity as head of the VFP, the Board of Trustees of the Veterans of World War II, and the Philippine Veterans Bank, is guilty of mismanagement and graft and corruption.

De Ocampo, a veteran of the famous Hunters ROTC guerrilla group, denies any wrongdoing, and says Beloso and his group are merely grinding an old and unwieldy axe. "I am no crook," he says. ***(See accompanying story on Page A1.)***

But Crevo backs up its allegations of P1.3 billion in anomalies with per-

VETERANS/ A21

DENNIS SABANGAN

FIESTA CRAZE

The girl in the middle won P50 for blowing empty a plastic cup of flour first in one of the games featured during yesterday's fiesta celebration in Baclaran, Parañaque City.

Critics out to discredit 'old man,' says lawyer

By John Nery

"IT'S like discrediting Rizal."

Lawyer Romeo Roxas, the single biggest stockholder in the Philippine Veterans Bank, is referring to allegations of graft and corruption levied by a group of veterans and their associates against Emmanuel de Ocampo, president of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines (VFP) for the last 16 years.

They are all out to "discredit the old man—the only veteran who can really lead them," he says, his eyes welling with tears. "You take out the old man," he adds, and the fate of "veteranism" is sealed.

"All these guys complaining (he mentions retired colonels Charlie Beloso and Juanito Recio, among other persons), they had no stake" in the rehabilitation of both the VFP and the bank, which reopened in 1992. Today, as a matter of record, the PVB is the most liquid and the sixth most solvent local bank in the country.

When De Ocampo, now 79, took over as president of the VFP in 1986, he says in a separate interview, he found "nothing."

"In fact, it was a dilapidated building, there was no money, the employees were not paid for three months, no lights, nothing."

He looks pained to be even talking about the matter, and as the interview wore on, his discomfort at having to retail his achievements grew more visible. In 1986, he says, he discovered three major problems at the VFP, the country's largest veterans association.

"The veterans were not given any pension at all. None. Hospital care and medical care was practically nil. And the disability pensions were small."

CRITICS/ A20

Lacson wants pork barrel scrapped

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—A neophyte senator has broken the Senate's silence over the squabble of congressmen over pork barrel by urging Congress to abolish it.

Opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson said here Saturday that the pork barrel system had corrupted legislators.

"(Pork barrel) is always the source of criticism. It is always the source of corruption (in Congress)," Lacson, the Philippine National Police chief of deposed President Joseph Estrada, said at the induction of officers of the Baguio Press Club.

Pork barrel is money taken from the national budget that funds projects of a senator in various parts of the country or of a member of the House of Representatives in a congressional district.

Lacson said he had spent enough time parrying bribe offers from groups interested in using his Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), a pork barrel allocated to every senator and member of the House of Representatives.

"*Sabi ko bahala na* (I told myself so be it). I am sure I will earn the ire of my colleagues (if I push for the abolition of pork) but never mind . . . I believe that lawmakers should not build roads, you know. We should make

LACSON/ A20

'Railroading' of power bill revision feared

By Christine Avendaño
in Manila
and Yolanda Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ANY MOVE to terminate hearings on a House bill that seeks to amend the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) "smacks of another railroaded bill in the making," Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales yesterday said.

Rosales said she would ask today Rep. Alipio Badelles, chair of the House energy committee, not to call for a vote this week on House Bill No. 4741 because the measure had not been thoroughly deliberated upon.

"(Pushing for the termination of the hearings) undermines the tenets of democratic debate in the legislative process reflected at the committee level," she said in a statement.

"Short-circuiting the legislative process may seem convenient for some of us seeking reelection but may prove

RAILROADING/ A4

Case of Estrada partisans extravagant exercise in futility

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

THE COMPLAINT filed by partisans of deposed President Joseph Estrada charging a cabal of generals with mutiny for their withdrawal of military support during Edsa II represents an attack to destroy the legitimacy of President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration.

It also reaffirms the fixation of Filipinos with coups since the 1986 People Power Revolution and resurrects the specter of military intervention, casting an overhang on Philippine democracy that has yet to reestablish firmly the concept of civilian supremacy over the military.

The issue facing the Office of the Ombudsman, in which the complaint was laid, is whether then Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Angelo Reyes and his cohorts had committed mutiny in bringing the AFP behind his decision to defect from the Estrada administration on Jan. 19, 2001 and to transfer its loyalty to then Vice President Macapagal.

The complaint is based on a law, enacted in the aftermath of the 1986 civilian-backed military revolt against the Marcos regime, that makes a military coup or mutiny a criminal act.

So, the question at hand is whether the Reyes-led defection was a mutiny.

The complaint is an extravagant exercise in futility. I don't believe it has a serious chance of prospering in the Office of the Ombudsman mainly because there is considerable evidence that Reyes, now the defense secretary, framed his decision to intervene in the context of Article 2, Section 3 of the 1987 Constitution.

The article states that "civilian authority, is at all times, supreme over the military." However, it also says that "the Armed Forces is the protector of the people and the state."

This mandate guided and influenced Reyes' decision in severing the AFP's loyalty to Estrada, within the context of the danger of a civil war erupting over the constitutional crisis over his governance.

CASE/ A20

SK list-up starts amid disillusionment

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE GIRL who wanted to vote so badly she bothered the Supreme Court for a special registration for youth voters last year is now rethinking her advocacy.

Michelle Betito, 20, said she could not help but think that the Sangguniang Kabataan elections, which had been keeping the Commission on Elections busy the past few months, had become irrelevant to the country's youth.

Betito, who will still vote—for the first time—in the synchronized barangay and youth polls on July 15, is disillusioned by the corruption in government and the heavy influence traditional politicians wield on even the most innocent SK officials.

"Ideally, (SK officials) should play a role because they represent the youth, but they have not really done that much for young people," Betito said.

"Even at the SK level, there are reports of corruption already. That's what they learn from their elders, so it destroys the idealism," she added.

The Comelec is working overtime on its information campaign for the special registration today and tomorrow. All youths 15 to 17 years old by July 15 may enlist in their barangays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Applicants for registration should bring any of the following: birth certificate, baptismal certificate, school ID, library ID or any document that will establish identity and qualification.

In Davao City, Comelec Commissioner Mehol Sadain said the poll body still expected a heavy turnout of registrants despite the recent terrorist bombings and the military campaign against the Abu Sayyaf.

"We have no report of untoward incidents from the field in Mindanao—even in Maguindanao or Lanao del Sur," Sadain told reporters during the Kapihan sa Philippine Information Agency on Saturday.

But Sadain hinted that con-

SK/ A20

MICHELLE Betito rethinks advocacy.

DENNIS SABANGAN

Second **FRONT PAGE**

PAG GUSTO NG TAO, DI COUP YUN!

FORMER SEN. SALONGA EXPLAINS

When 'people power' is not a coup

FORMER Senate president Jovito R. Salonga pointed out yesterday the differences between a coup d'etat and people power, in the light of the recent controversy generated by then President Joseph Estrada's ouster on Jan. 20, 2001.

"The events that occurred on Jan. 16-20, 2001 at Edsa and in various plazas in the country which we summed up and called People Power 2 was a world away from a coup d'etat," said Salonga, principal author of the Anti-Coup d'etat Law (RA 6968), in a statement. ***(See related story on page 3.)***

Salonga said a coup d'etat (or *golpe de estado* in Spanish) is a swift sudden attack planned in secret and led by government insiders, usually the military or police.

It is planned clandestinely to achieve the end sought—the collapse of the government at the shortest possible time, preferably within one or two days, and the formation of a new government, he said.

Hence, Salonga said, the consent of the people is not sought in a coup. Popular consent would in fact prevent or impede its success, he added.

A coup presupposes the use of force, violence and intimidation, thus, Salonga said, there is no such thing as a "peaceful coup," the term used by a Malacañang official the other day.

By contrast, he said, People Power 2 was initiated and carried out openly by civilians, mostly students, their parents, business executives and private and public employees and NGOs, all of whom did not resort to violence.

And while a coup is usually over in 48 hours or less, Salonga noted, People Power 2 became irreversible only on the fourth day (Jan. 19) after the military and police, "unarmed," withdrew their support from Estrada and joined the protests.

"What Gen. Angelo Reyes and the other military and police officials did on Jan. 19 was not a coup but a withdrawal of support from the president as a result of an informed judgment on the magnitude of the popular outrage against his leadership," Salonga said.

"As recorded by the media and recounted by Reyes himself, in the judgment of military officials, the president could no longer function, what with the mounting demonstrations, the threats from the Left and the Right, and economic factors, like the sinking peso and the collapse of the stock market," Salonga said.

In comparison, "what the military officers and their followers under the leadership of Col. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan mounted in August 1987 and December 1989 were coups aimed at toppling the administration of President Corazon Aquino. They did not succeed for lack of popular support," Salonga said.

He said a coup d'etat should also be differentiated from rebellion or sedition.

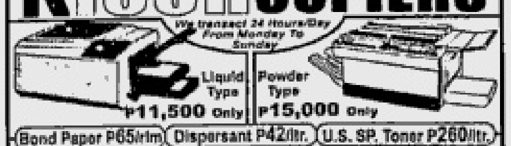
"Communist insurgents are outsiders who, by a long process of propaganda and indoctrination, sow seeds of discontent among the masses in the hope that they would support their armed struggle. They are engaged in rebellion or sedition but not in a coup d'etat," Salonga said.

"In Estrada's case, the military and police shifted their support to his constitutional successor, Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Majority of the Cabinet appointed by Estrada himself independently arrived at the same judgment, as did the leaders of both houses of Congress.

"In other words, (there was no) secret plan to topple the Estrada administration. This was not a coup d'etat, as defined under RA 6968, which I drafted and co-authored with 20 other senators. It was, if I recall correctly, approved unanimously, including by Senators Estrada and (Juan Ponce) Enrile," Salonga said.

Almost one and a half years after Estrada's ouster, controversy continues to surround the events that brought it about.

The controversy was revived with the filing last week of a case for the crime of coup d'etat against Reyes and other officials by a group of newspaper publishers and columnists, who based the charges on a recounting of Edsa 2 events by INQUIRER consultant and columnist Amando Doronila in a book.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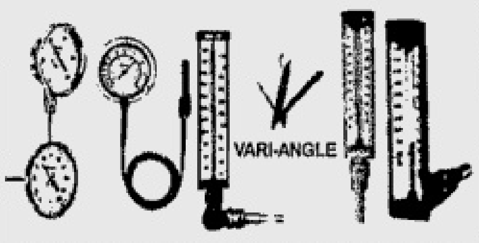
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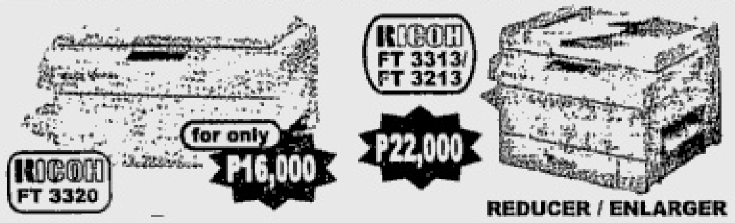
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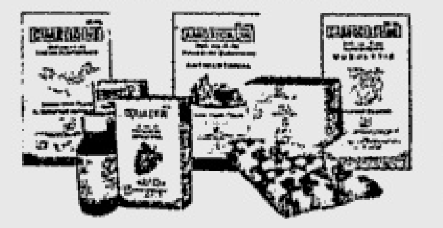
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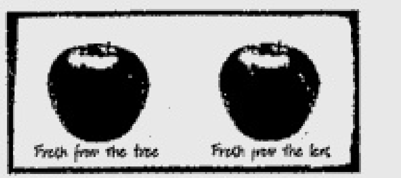

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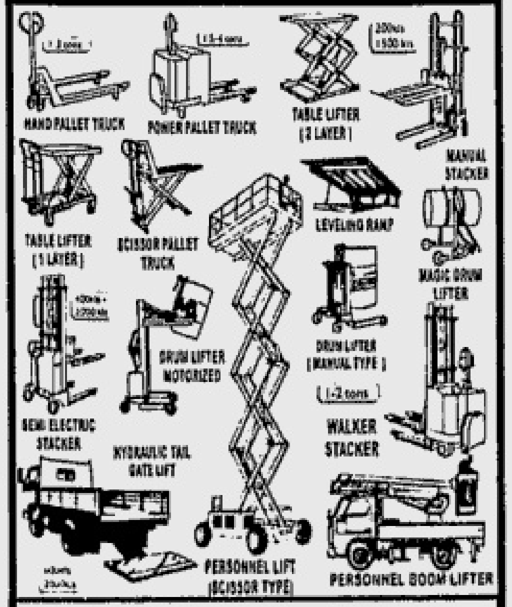

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GMA off to Japan on working visit

By Elena R. Torrijos

TOKYO—President Macapagal-Arroyo arrives today for a five-day working visit to Tokyo and Osaka to reinforce economic ties between the Philippines and Japan.

The President is coming primarily upon the invitation of Japan's leading financial newspaper, Nihon Keizai Shimbum, whose 8th Nikeei International Conference on the "Future of Asia" tomorrow will be keynoted by Ms Macapagal, the guest of honor.

After the conference, the President is expected to meet with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, as well as Japanese business and financial leaders.

Acting Press Secretary Sylvestre Afable Jr. said the President will ask Japan to maintain its level of Official Development Assistance to the Philippines.

Many donors to the ODA have questioned the utilization of its loans given the failure of the Philippine government to provide counterpart funding for projects.

Afable said the President will also seek Japan's closer involvement in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"We have to inform the Japanese people, their government as well as those attending the symposium that the Philippines is committed to a deep and continuing involvement in the global regime," Afable said.

Japan plays a pivotal role as the Philippines' number one source of the ODA, its second largest trading partner and its largest source of tourism receipts.

During the conference, the President will also have occasion to meet with the other Asian leaders attending, namely, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic of Bounnhang Vorachitch and Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam Pham Gia Khiem.

Tonight, the President will be conferred an honorary doctor of laws degree at Waseda University.

3 ranking officers disagreed on Edsa

By Martin P. Marfil

AT LEAST three ranking military officials had questioned the military's withdrawal of support from then President Joseph Estrada on Jan. 19, 2001, at the height of the People Power 2 uprising at Edsa.

This was the contention of a former military official who said the three—Air Force chief Lt. Gen. Benjamin Defensor, Navy chief Rear Admiral Guillermo Wong and Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Gregorio Camiling—went to Reyes' house after Edsa to question the constitutionality of their action on Jan. 19.

Reyes, together with several military officials, are facing charges before the Ombudsman for their role in Edsa 2. The suit was brought by five newspaper publishers and columnists who charged that what Reyes and the officials committed was the crime of coup d'etat when they switched allegiance from Estrada to Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

(See related story on Page 2.)

According to the military official, who spoke to defense reporters on condition of anonymity, the events of Jan. 19 started when Reyes, then AFP chief of staff, called for a meeting of the board of generals that morning.

When the board members arrived, they were taken to a home in Corinthian Gardens, a posh subdivision along Edsa, where they were informed about the plan to withdraw military support from Estrada.

From Corinthian Gardens, the board of generals—including the Air Force and Navy chiefs—proceeded to the Edsa shrine and announced their decision to the assembled demonstrators.

That night, however, the source said, Defensor, Wong and Camiling went to Reyes' house in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, where they told him of their apprehension about the constitutionality of their act.

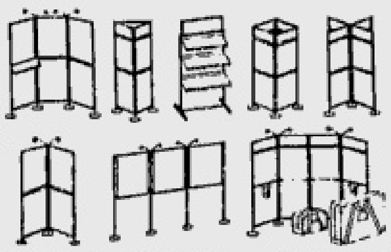
"We just wanted to get a better rationale for our action because we had to explain it to our troops," Defensor said.

But in the book by Amando Doronilla, "The Fall of Joseph Estrada," the three had allegedly proposed setting up a junta at the time.

Defensor said they did not talk about putting up a junta but merely sought clarification for their actions at Edsa.

Defensor and Camiling held a press conference later to deny they any plans of setting up a junta.

They did not deny, though, that they went to Reyes' house that night with Wong.



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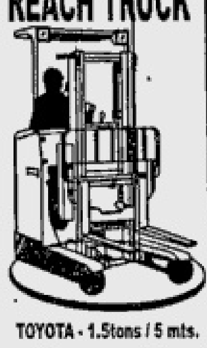

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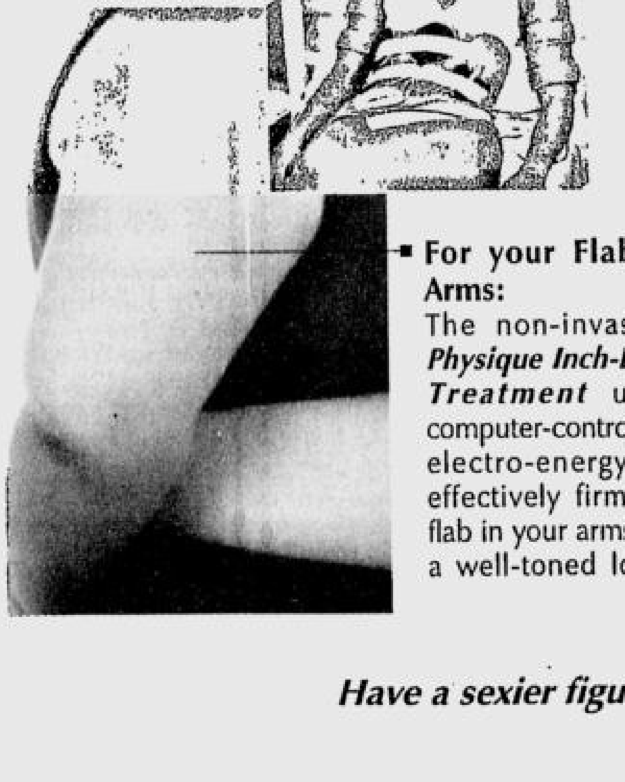

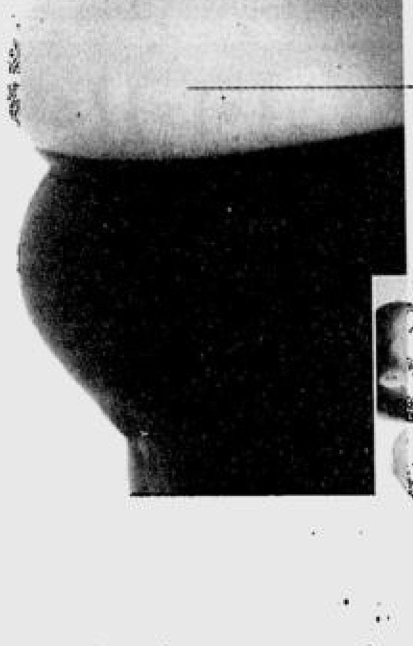

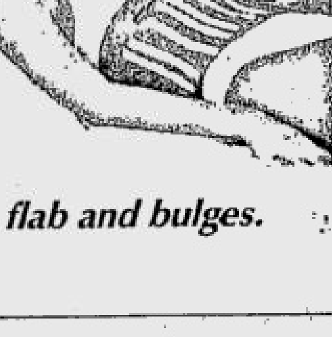

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'Railroading' of power bill revision feared

From page A1

disastrous to an ailing economy now burdened by the National Power Corp.'s P600-billion debt."

Badelles said last week that his committee was likely to call for a vote on the approval of the measure, which its proponents say seeks to reduce the purchased power adjustment (PPA) charges and pave the way for the "smooth" privatization of the Napocor.

The PPA is an automatic recovery mechanism set up by Napocor and power distributors like Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) to cover power cost and fluctuations in fuel prices and the peso-dollar rate.

Militant groups and some legislators are demanding the scrapping of the PPA, which accounts for at least half of electricity costs.

June 6 deadline

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. said the joint houses of Congress would pass a law on June 6 to reduce the PPA charges. "This will give a massive relief to the consumers," he said in Dagupan City.

Rosales asked why Badelles would push for a vote when the questions she had raised during last week's hearings had not been answered.

For instance, Rosales noted that Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho had promised to give her only this week his answer to her question involving the bill's proposal to grant value-added tax (VAT) exemptions to the entire process of generating power and supplying it consumers.

The Akbayan party-list representative had asked Camacho whether this provision would allow power producers and suppliers "the privilege of claiming input tax credits for their purchase of VAT-covered inputs."

Through Rosales' request, Badelles had asked the Congressional Planning and Budget Office to do a study on the possibility of putting PPA charges in an escrow account pending the investigation of the contracts of independent power producers (IPPs).

Rosales said she was against a provision in the proposed amendments in which loans to be incurred by Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), which will oversee the privatization of Napocor, would be assumed by the government.

PSALM would also be allowed to borrow beyond the ceiling provided for by the Foreign Borrowings Act, according to Rosales.

She said she planned to come up with her own bill seeking other amendments to the Epira so that this could be incorporated into HB 4741.

She said she would push for the scrapping of a provision in the Epira that requires consumers to shoulder the stranded debts and costs of private distribution utilities.

Week-long protest

A group of workers said it would stage a week-long "labor offensive" to demand the abolition of the PPA.

Victor Briz, president of the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, said the series of protest activities would be called "Labor Power vs. Power Companies."

"Workers have a reason to rebel since a P1,000 electricity bill eats up almost 20 percent of the minimum wage of P6,500 per month," Briz said.

He said the protest would start with the mobilization of 1,000 unions in eastern Metro Manila at the main office of Meralco on Ortigas Avenue in Pasig City.

The rally will denounce the alleged collusion between Meralco and its sister IPPs that results in the high PPA charges.

The BMP said Meralco's PPA was bigger than that of Napocor's.

Other protest actions included a big mobilization at the House of Representatives in time for the hearings of the energy committee, a rally of Valenzuela workers and a blockade of the Bicutan interchange by thousands of workers from Parañaque City.

The BMP also reiterated its call that former President Fidel Ramos be investigated for his role in forging grossly disadvantageous contracts with the IPPs.

"Not only must Ramos be summoned to congressional hearings, but he must also be punished if proven guilty. If a squatter can be jailed for qualified theft of electricity, then Ramos must be shot for plunder on a grand scale," he said.

Weak economy

De Venecia blamed the plunging economy for the excess power generated by Napocor and the IPPs.

He said that when the IPPs established their power plants in the early 1990s, their projections were based on a rising economy.

"Unfortunately, we were affected by the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and then our economy was bungled by (deposed President Joseph) Estrada, so we have the excess power," he said.

De Venecia said the government had no choice but to pay for the excess power because this was stipulated in the agreement that it signed with the IPPs.

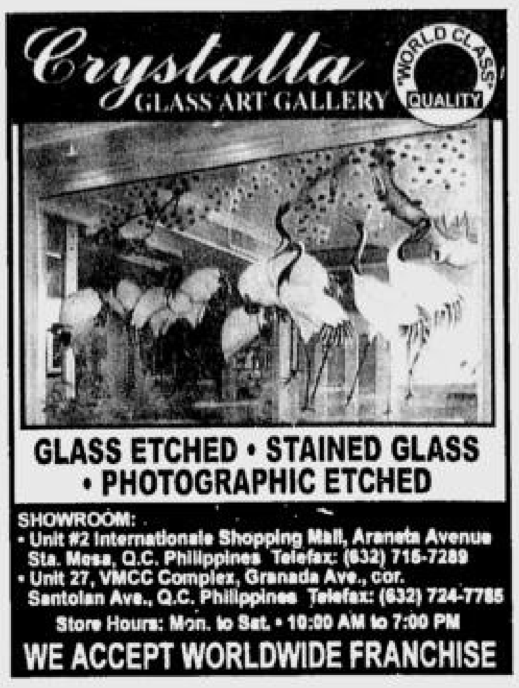
He also defended Ramos, under whose administration the IPP contracts were signed, to solve the 10-hour daily blackouts in the early 1990s.

"He (Ramos) had to solve the problem fast, and he did it," De Venecia said.

The Speaker said the Senate and House of Representatives would authorize the Department of Finance and the Department of Energy to renegotiate with international creditor banks and the IPPs the payment scheme for the power generation contracts with the IPPs.

"I'm sure there will be a significant reduction in the payment. We will also work for a longer payment period so that the government will not feel the impact of payment," he said.

He said he was confident that both the creditor banks and the IPPs would agree to a longer repayment period. *With a report from Gerald G. Lacuarta in Manila*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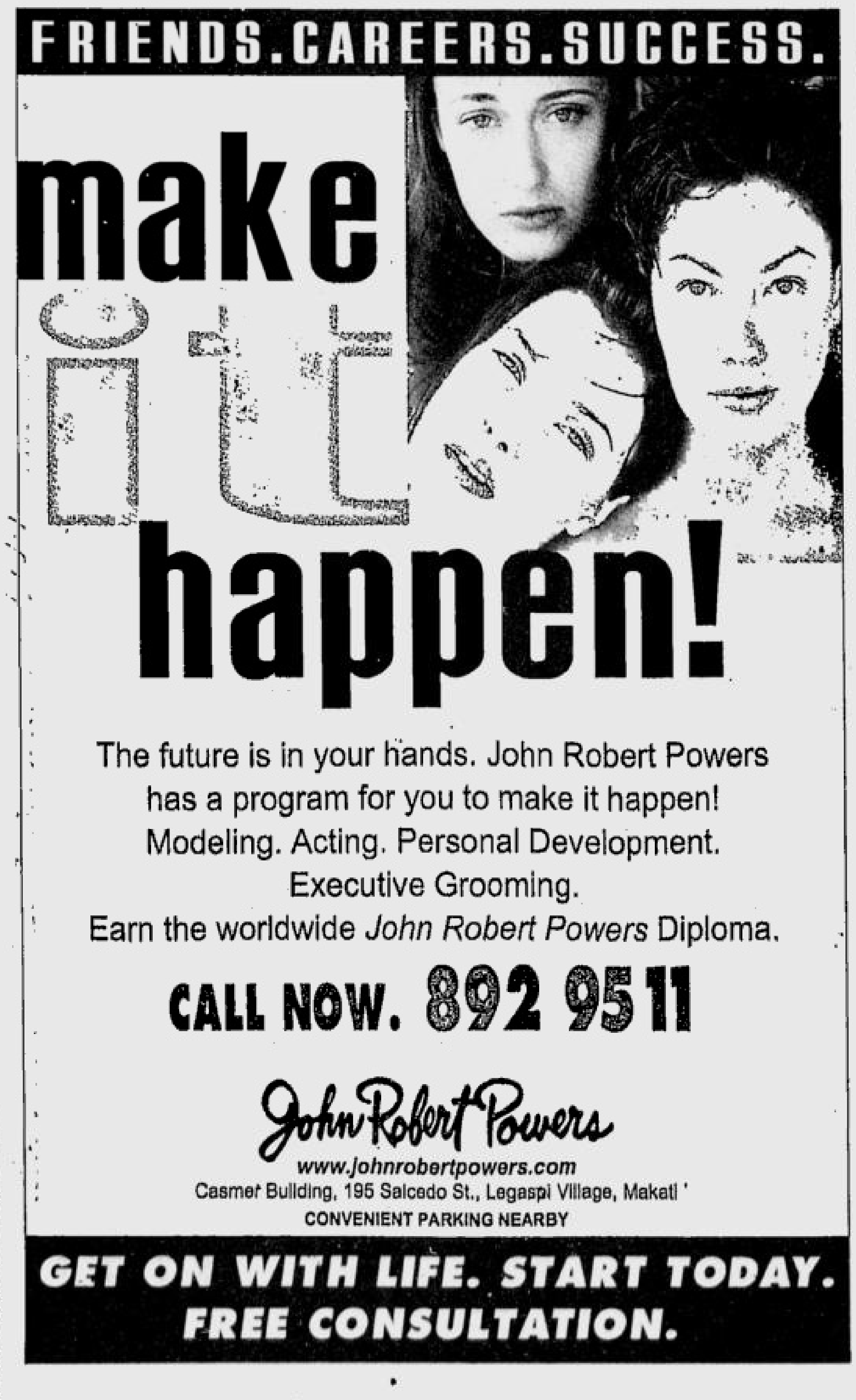
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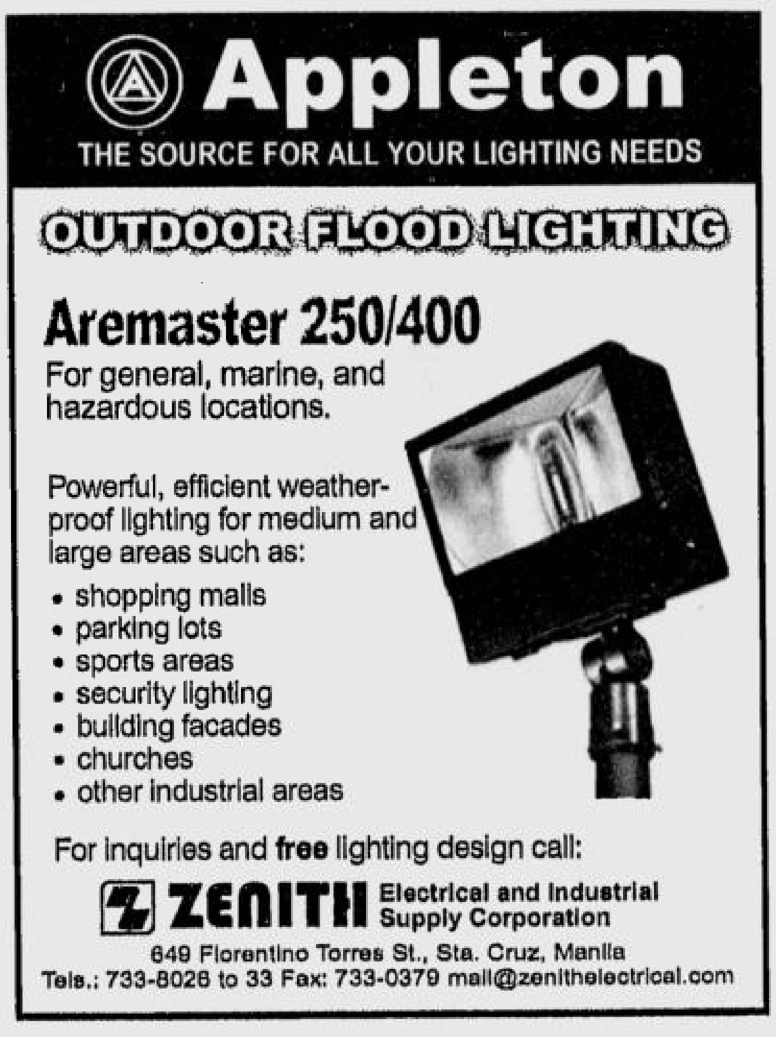
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Benipayo faces two ₱100M libel suits

By Gerald Lacuarta and Blanche Rivera

COMMISSION on Elections chair Alfredo Benipayo faces possible arrest today following the filing of twin libel suits against him by the winning bidder for the Voter's Registration and Identification System (VRIS) project.

Quezon City prosecutors filed the two P100-million suits lodged by Photokina Marketing Corp., whom Benipayo had allegedly accused of bribing its way to the P6.5-billion deal with the poll body.

The cases were filed last Thursday before two separate courts, which are requiring the Comelec chair to post P10,000 bail in each case. The resolutions ordering Benipayo's arrest were issued after he failed to submit a counter-affidavit during the preliminary investigations.

Benipayo is invoking his immunity from criminal suits as Comelec chair, which helped him dodge graft charges in the Office of the Ombudsman late last yeat.

Instead of a counter affidavit, Benipayo submitted a "manifestation" seeking dismissal of the case by questioning the jurisdiction of the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office over his person. The manifestation did not discuss the merits of the libel complaints.

The first libel suit, now before the sala of Judge Normandy Pizzaro of QC RTC Branch 101, stems from Benipayo's statement on a live television show on March 13. During the show, "Pointblank" on ANC 23, he accused Photokina and its foreign partners of rigging the VRIS bid through bribery.

Benipayo said Photokina funded a smear campaign against him because he strongly opposed the P6.5-billion contract, which the Comelec awarded a Photokina-led consortium en banc on Oct. 3, 2000.

The second libel case, before the sala of Judge Jaime Salazar Jr. of branch 103, involves Benipayo's speech in the forum on electoral reform at the University of the Philippines Diliman on Jan. 31.

In his speech, Benipayo said Photokina was "at it again, trying to hoodwink us into effecting a contract that is so grossly disadvantageous to the government, that it offends common sense to say that (the project) would be worth the P6.5-billion price tag."

The speech was published in full in another newspaper.

Photokina submitted to the courts a dubbed copy and transcripts of the TV interview, and the original full copy of Benipayo's UP speech.

Judge Jaime Salazar Jr. has sought inhibition from the second case, saying Benipayo's father-in-law, the late Supreme Court Chief Justice Fred Ruiz-Castro, had been instrumental in his appointment as judge.

Photikina has filed a motion to consolidate the cases.

Benipayo, who remains unconfirmed as Comelec chair (he was appointed Feb. 16, 2001) due to strong opposition, is invoking impeachability as head of an independent constitutional body, to evade the libel suits, but QC prosecutors say a libel charge or penalty for such do not necessarily entail removal from office.

Benipayo and fellow commissioners Resurreccion Borra and Florentino Tuason Jr. have been at odds with four other commissioners—Luz Tancangco, Ralph Antion, Mehol Sadain and Rufino Javier—over the VRIS project.

Benipayo has repeatedly vowed that he will block the implementation of the project, which the four commissioners are supporting, for as long as he is in the Comelec.

In November last year, lawyer Dante Barcebal filed graft charges against Benipayo for allegedly using government funds to buy luxury vehicles and medicines, and to sponsor his trip to Sweden. The Ombudsman junked the charges, saying Benipayo was an impeachable official and was protected by immunity from criminal and administrative charges.

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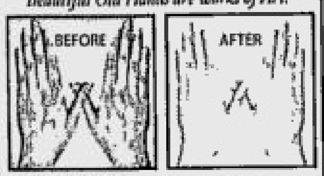

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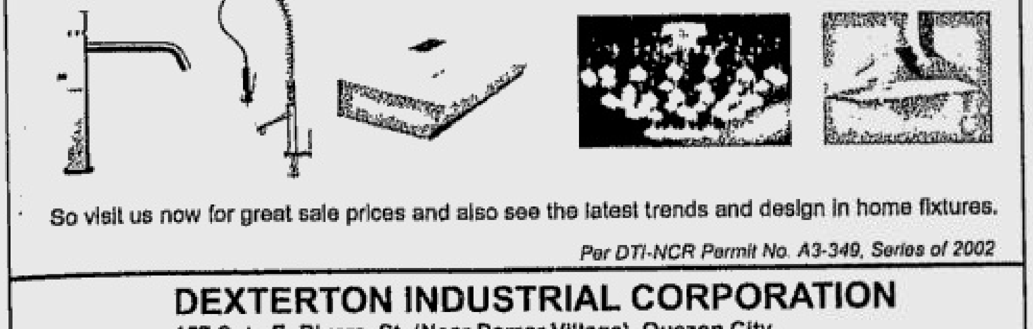

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Burnhams entering second year in captivity

UNITED States Christian missionary couple Martin and Gracia Burnham are set to enter their second year in captivity at the hands of Abu Sayyaf bandits despite the best efforts of the Philippine military, aided by the world's most powerful army.

The Burnhams, from Wichita, Kansas, are both ill in the malarial jungles of Basilan island in Mindanao, where some 5,000 Filipino soldiers, backed by about 1,000 US troops and high-tech American intelligence gathering devices, are operating non-stop to rescue them from the small band of Abu Sayyaf kidnappers.

They still remain captive despite persistent reports of ransom negotiations with the bandits, who have been linked to the terrorist al-Qaida network.

No end to misery

There appears to be no end in sight for the misery of the Burnhams, both in their early 40s, whose plight is just a footnote to the larger US-Philippines joint military effort against international terrorism.

Malacañang cannot say whether the Burnhams will stay a day longer at the hands of the Abu Sayyaf after May 27, the anniversary of their kidnapping last year.

"It is really a difficult operation and we cannot give you operational details at this point," Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable said. "We cannot make speculations."

Afable said that "authorities" had requested that "operational details be kept under wraps for the meantime because the operations are 'hot.'"

"The operations are ongoing. They are already in the advance stage," Afable said.

Taking a break from their work for the non-denominational New Tribes Mission last year, the Burnhams left their three children at home and checked into the Dos Palmas island resort in Palawan to celebrate their wedding anniversary.

On the morning of May 27 they and 18 other guests and resort staff found themselves tied up aboard a motorboat manned by the Abu Sayyaf bandits, speeding south toward Basilan island.

Of the 20 Dos Palmas hostages, three have been executed, including Peruvian-American Guillermo Sobero, who was beheaded on June 12, 2001 as an "Independence Day gift" by the Abu Sayyaf to the Macapagal administration.

Aside from the Burnhams, the Abu Sayyaf are also holding Filipino nurse Ediborah Yap, who was among the additional hostages taken by the Abu Sayyaf when they entered the town of Lamitan in Basilan on June 1.

The bandits managed to slip out of a military cordon in Lamitan amid claims that certain military officials have been paid by the Abu Sayyaf so they could escape.

When President Macapagal-Arroyo agreed in November to host US troops to help US President George W. Bush's fight against global terrorism, the move gained strong support among Filipinos weary of kidnappings and fuelled hope of a swift rescue for the Burnhams.

Beyond reach

Clashes became more frequent and dozens of fleeing rebels were killed or arrested, but their hostages remained beyond reach.

Mindful of local political sensibilities—not to mention the Philippine constitution—President Macapagal barred the American troops from a direct combat role, limiting them to joint training and intelligence-sharing. This was later expanded to rebuilding the island's crumbling roads and wharves.

But Abu Sayyaf leader Abu Sabaya has mocked the US effort. "The superpower is helpless," he told local radio by telephone last month.

US Joint Chiefs of Staff chair General Richard Myers visited Basilan last month and pronounced himself satisfied with the broad progress of the anti-terror effort there. But he had no good news for the Burnham's relatives in Wichita.

A more recent Basilan visitor, US Army Department Under-secretary Les Brownlee, admitted: "We're not there yet."

The American troops are due to leave in mid-July. Both sides said there were no immediate plans to replace the US military contingent.

The Philippine military task force going after the Basilan gang might have underestimated the rebels' popular support in the mainly Muslim island, their commander said.

"Many Muslims are still supporting the terrorists either because they are afraid or are sympathizers of the Abu Sayyaf," Col. Alexander Aleo said.

Amid official denials that up to $300,000 in ransom had been paid, the Burnhams' desperate relatives said they had negotiated with the kidnappers in March—only to see the gunmen renege on a deal to free the captives. ***Carlito Pablo, with a report from AFF***

'Wonder drug' proven to lower blood pressure introduced here

By B. Rivera

A "WONDER drug" proven effective in the United States, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom in reducing the risk of strokes by lowering blood pressure is now in the Philippines.

Losartan, marketed locally as cozaar, is being promoted by the country's leading cardiologists following the results of the Losartan Intervention for Endpoint Reduction in Hypertension, or LIFE.

Eugene Reyes, cardiologist at the UP-Philippine General Hospital, said the LIFE study showed that medication by Losartan was easier to sustain and consistently lowered the morbidity and mortality rates among patients with hypertension and heart ailments.

A test conducted on 9,193 hypertensive patients in the United States and Scandinavia revealed that management of blood pressure was the key to treating patients with heart ailments.

The LIFE study also showed that angiotensin receptor blockers (ARB) were more effective in stopping high blood pressure than beta-blockers, which are commonly used by physicians worldwide.

"What is interesting and exciting is that the LIFE study showed that Losartan could further reduce the risk (of strokes due to hypertension) by 25 percent," Reyes said.

Esperanza Cabral, cardiologist at the Philippine Heart Center who co-presented the results of the LIFE study, said ARBs reduced the combined risk of cardiovascular death due to strokes and heart attacks. Losartan is the world's first and only ARB.

"Before, most doctors were content with just lowering the patient's high blood pressure. The choice of medication did not really matter," Cabral said.

"But with the results of the LIFE study, clinical experts say that how you lower blood pressure can be just as important," she said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, May 20, 2002
7th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: *James 3:13-18*
Gospel: *Mk 9:14-29*

When Jesus came down the mountain with Peter, James and John to the place where they had left the disciples, they saw many people around and some teachers of the Law arguing with them. When the people saw Jesus, they were astonished and ran to greet him.

He asked, "What are you arguing about with them?" A man answered him from the crowd, "Master, I brought my son to you for he has a dumb spirit. Whenever the spirit seizes him, it throws him down and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth and becomes stiff all over. I asked your disciples to drive the spirit out, but they could not."

Jesus replied, "You faithless people. How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him.

As soon as the spirit saw Jesus, it shook and convulsed the boy who fell on the ground and began rolling about, foaming at the mouth. Then Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" He replied, "From childhood. And it has often thrown him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us."

Jesus said to him, "Why do you say: 'If you can?' All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do believe, but help the little faith I have."

Jesus saw that the crowd was increasing rapidly, so he ordered the evil spirit, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you: Leave the boy and never enter him again." The evil spirit shook and convulsed the boy and with a terrible shriek came out. The boy lay like a corpse and people said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him and the boy stood up.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive out the spirit?" And he answered, "Only prayer can drive out this kind, nothing else."

Commentary

"Lord, I do believe, but help the little faith I have." This prayer is the model of all Christian prayer. If we turn to God in prayer it is because we have faith; and yet in doing it we discover the fragility of our faith. We are not aware of our lack of faith and easily forget how far we are from the Master. We consider ourselves great believers but our faith has not yet moved anything. Sometimes we find ourselves like Jesus in front of so much evil, and we need prayer to overcome it. Prayer is to direct our spirit to God; to reflect and to discern with God's criteria. There are thousands of ways of praying, of keeping our spirit oriented toward God, communicating with God in the depth of our spirit, even while working.

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Preparations for El Niño pushed

CALLS for a concerted effort against the expected effects of El Niño have intensified as the dreaded dry spell approaches.

Continuous food production is crucial during the affected period, which starts next month, said opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara.

The former agriculture secretary has urged the government to establish food production zones by "immediately" redrawing the country's agricultural map and identifying the farmlands that are least vulnerable to the expected drought.

Angara said that during his term, the Department of Agriculture identified 160,000 hectares of prime rice land as the most vulnerable to dry spells. "Intense preparations should be made in these areas," he said.

This year's drought has been forecast to be milder than previous occurrences but, Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor maintains, "It's better to be prepared for the worst."

Montemayor said he has asked Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. to convince congressmen to allocate portions of their Countrywide Development Fund for anti-El Niño measures in their regions. The DA chief also asked the LGUs to set aside five percent of their Internal Revenue Allotment for the same drive.

The private sector can help, Montemayor added, by conserving water. He urged the Philippine Water Works Association, the biggest concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water, and the regulatory agency Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, to conduct conservation campaigns.

Angara earlier asked the government to fund six major strategies against El Niño: cloud seeding, construction of small water dams and impounding areas, rehabilitation of damaged communal irrigation systems, distribution of shallow tube wells, and massive planting of drought-resistant crops.

Montemayor issued Administrative Order No. 11 directing all DA regional field personnel to adopt and recommend the application of coco peat or other coconut husk materials as soil conditioner.

Montemayor said using coco peat for mulching and soil conditioning will reduce or altogether avoid water stress in plants, particularly crops. "Significant research work confirms the capability of coco peat to provide the soil with favorable crop aeration, better soil moisture during long periods, and additional macro, secondary and micro-nutrients hence avoiding yield-limiting conditions," he said. *Gerald G. Lacuarta*

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Yanks treat Pinoy troops hurt in crash

UNITED States troops on counter-terrorism exercises in the southern Philippines treated 13 Filipino soldiers who were injured in a road accident during operations against the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan, a military official said yesterday.

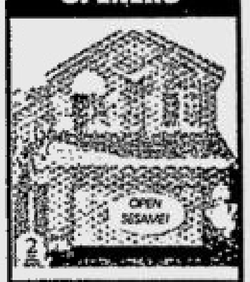
Col. Alexander Aleo, a military brigade head in Isabela City, Basilan's capital, said the American troops gave the Filipinos first aid at a local army camp after a truck carrying about 30 Filipino

The driver had apparently lost control on a curve and the truck narrowly avoided a ravine, Aleo said.

Nine of the injured, including two in critical condition, were later flown by helicopter to a military hospital in Zamboanga City across a narrow strait, he said.

US Special Forces in the Philippines are barred from engaging in combat but have provided weapons, aerial surveillance, air transport and medical support to a few thousand Filipino soldiers waging a protracted war against the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf rebels in the south.

At least twice since March, American soldiers treated and airlifted Filipino soldiers wounded while battling guerrillas in the Basilan town of Lantawan. *AP*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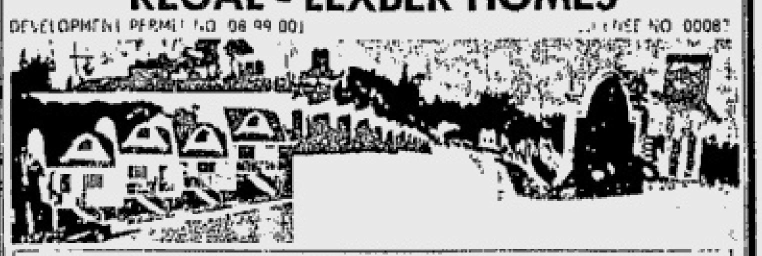

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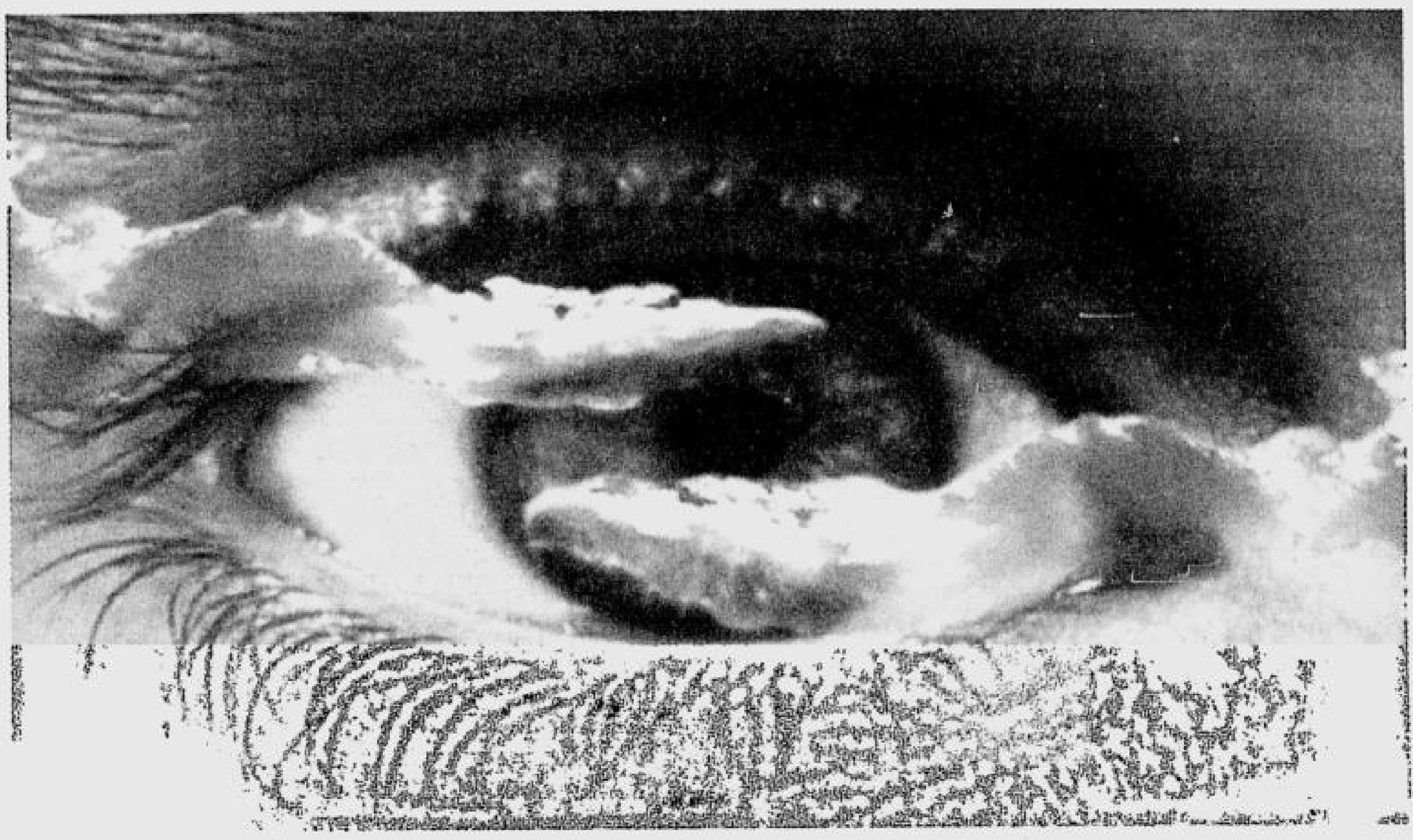

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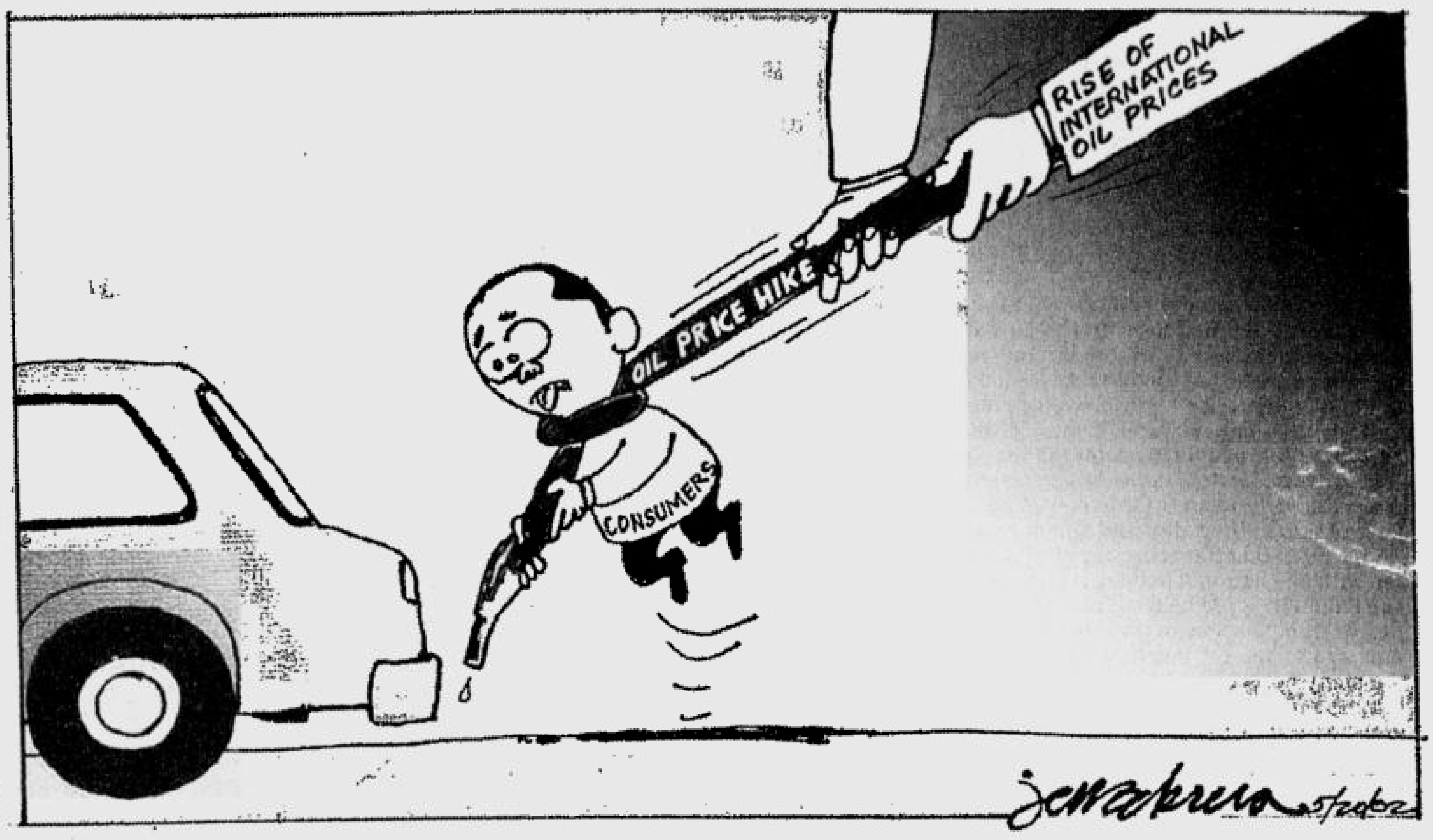
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Bushwhacked

EDITORIAL

THE FAMOUS question that haunted one American president 30 years ago has come back to spook another Republican in the White House. "What did the president know, and when did he know it?" Katie Couric of NBC asked last week on her popular television morning show. The allusion, of course, was to the question that defined both the Watergate scandal and the culpability of Richard Nixon in the public mind. This time, however, it was used with reference to George W. Bush.

Last week, Bush admitted that a month before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., the Central Intelligence Agency informed him about a possible plan by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network to hijack American airplanes.

This revelation, coming soon after news broke out that two months before the attacks the Federal Bureau of Investigation office in Arizona had raised an alert about a suspicious number of Middle Eastern-looking men enrolling in aviation schools, has reaped the whirlwind in both the halls of Congress and America's famously contentious political talk shows.

"Was there a failure of intelligence?" asked Richard Gephardt, a leading Democrat, apparently without irony. Another Democrat, Sen. John Edwards, asked: "Was this information communicated to a central source?"

Yes, apparently. But White House spokesperson Ari Fleischer tried to put the matter in perspective by qualifying the intelligence advice actually received. Bush "did not receive information about the use of airplanes as missiles by suicide bombers," he said, adding: "This was a new type of attack that was not foreseen."

US National Security Adviser Condoleeza Rice said much the same thing: "I don't think anybody could have predicted that these people would take an airplane and slam it into the World Trade Center, take another one and slam it into the Pentagon."

Strictly speaking, this is incorrect. A CIA report in 1999 envisioned something eerily similar to what actually came to pass: "Suicide bombers belonging to al-Qaida's martyrdom battalion could crash-land an aircraft packed with high explosives...into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the (CIA), or the White House."

Fleischer, who learned of the report (long available on the Internet) only last Friday, correctly pointed out that the study was some form of scenario-building and was not based on specific intelligence. Bush himself has denied receiving any advice that pointed specifically to spectacular suicide attacks.

But the flap has already cost the US president, whose approval ratings have been not lower than stratospheric since Sept. 11, some political points. While some three-fourths of the American public still approve of his performance since that fateful day, a quick weekend poll showed that only a plurality now think that he had done everything he could have done to prevent the attacks.

This is a matter of some concern to Bush's partners in the international war on terrorism, because it unnecessarily calls the intelligence-gathering process vital to coalition dynamics into question. But our interest in the matter lies elsewhere; for us, the matter has less to do with the military and more to do with the practice of partisan politics in the world's oldest republic.

Bush's vice president, Dick Cheney, has emerged from the bunker he has been hiding in to counter-criticize the criticism against Bush. He scored the Democrats for "making political capital" of the issue. At first blush, he makes sense. Americans continue to be at war—even its modest incursion into the muddy waters of Basilan's hostage crisis is sold and seen in the United States as a second-front campaign. Cheney's cheerleading cheerfully assumes that opposition in wartime is tantamount to disloyalty. With the biennial congressional elections only six months away, the Democrats have not helped matters any. Democrats have been hammering the Republicans on domestic issues, with defeated presidential candidate Albert Gore taking the lead.

On the issue of making political capital from the Sept. 11 tragedy, however, the buck—quite clearly—stops in Harry Truman's old office. The Republicans have already raised a staggering $33 million for one fund-raising night in June. Their secret: They sold photos of Bush aboard Air Force One talking by phone to Cheney hours after the terrorists attacked. The picture is a good one, but it also paints a thousand words—all of them synonyms for political capital.

Gold bars, mutinies, and heroes and heels

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE GROUP that filed mutiny charges against Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and his generals for withdrawing support from their then commander in chief, President Estrada, during Edsa II, may have gained publicity (though it is wrong for journalists to attract attention to themselves) but that is as far as they will most likely get. As many others have already said, the case will not prosper—at least in the Macapagal administration. Rules are written by the victors, and Ms Macapagal, Reyes et al. are the victors. Had the mutineers lost, they could have been put to death as the villains. But because they won, they are now the heroes. High office is their reward for winning. The losers can only look with envy from the outside.

That is true of all mutinies, coups, rebellions and revolutions. Right and wrong is determined by who wins. The victors make the rules. Had Edsa I failed, Fidel Ramos, Juan Ponce Enrile and Gregorio Honasan would have been imprisoned—or shot—for mutiny. But because it succeeded, they were hailed as heroes and were elected to the highest offices in the land. Had Japan won during World War II and not the United States, it would have been MacArthur, and not Yamashita, who would have been hanged as a war criminal. Had Germany, and not the Allies, won in Europe, Churchill would have been the villain and Hitler the hero.

Bonifacio, Aguinaldo and our other heroes of the Revolution were regarded as mere bandits and *"insurrectos"* by the Spanish and American forces, and putting them to death was nothing more than executing ordinary criminals, not heroes. Had the American War for Independence failed, Washington, Jefferson and the others would have been villains and Lord Cornwallis and the other British generals the heroes. Had the South won the America Civil War, John Wilkes Boot would have been a celebrated hero and Abraham Lincoln not a martyr but a villain who deserved to be killed. History is written by the winner.

The mutiny case against Reyes et al., assuming it is not given short shrift by the lower courts, will surely go up to the Supreme Court. But it was the Supreme Court who legitimated Edsa II and the Macapagal presidency. How can it turn around and reverse itself in the mutiny case?

Besides, it was not the generals who instigated Edsa II. It was the ordinary people. The generals can say they just supported the sovereign people as the Constitution mandates. It states that the military "is the protector of the state and the people." The military owes its loyalty not to any one person but to the people who are the masters of even the President. And the people have the right to change their leaders. The Constitution recognizes this and in fact gives the people the right to recall officials and elect new ones.

In a democracy, the sovereign people are the masters.

* * *

The Philets Foundation secretariat was deluged with phone calls after it was announced here last May 16 that the alumni association will give one gold bar to each of the Golden Jubilarians who will attend its grand reunion at the Quezon City Sports Club this May 25. "Is that for real?" was the most asked question.

My answer: How would I know? I saw the gold bars. They looked like gold bars to me, but I'm no expert. I cannot guarantee that they are genuine.

Genuine or not, wouldn't it be nice to have one at home, as a conversation piece, as a paper weight or as a heavy object to club a burglar on the head with? It is free; it has your name on it. It will be given to you because you are a member of Philets Class '52; it is your souvenir as a Golden Jubilarian.

That is not the only thing that is free. As a Gloden Jubilarian, your dinner is free, too. Plus, you can win prizes in a raffle without having to but any ticket. All you have to do is attend the reunion and relive old and happy times with your fellow alumni.

Speaking of old times, you will also get, also for free, a reprint of the 1952 Thomasian with your graduation picture in it, toga and all. You can see how you and your classmates looked like 50 years ago, in case you can't recognize them on reunion night. And wouldn't it be nice to show these pictures to your grandchildren? They will most likely exclaim: "Lolo, you had more hair and less tummy then."

All of these benefits just because you are a Golden Jubilarian. The Ruby Jubilarians (Class '62), or Rubylarians, are also being honored but they won't get similar benefits. They won't get any ruby stones or Thomasian reprints or free tickets, though they will also win raffle prizes.

A special award will be given to Exequiel "Lito" Molina as an outstanding business journalist and a pioneering jazz musician.

The reunion night will also see the launching of the Philets Forum, a magazine that tackles the past, present and future of journalism, its problems and moral dilemmas, what is good and what is bad about it.

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: By insistent public demand, we are restoring the daily jokes here—if there are any funny and timely ones. Now, more than ever, people need to laugh and forget their woes. Here's the first:

The P200 bill with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's picture on it was not the original plan. The first plan was to put her photograph on a postage stamp but they were afraid people would spit on the wrong side.

What's wrong with the picture?

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

WHAT'S wrong with the picture?

Jake Macasaet, Niñez Cacho-Olivares, Angelino Banayo, Horacio Paredes and Herman Tiu Laurel say Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, outgoing AFP Chief of Staff Diomedio Villanueva and several other generals committed an act of mutiny at Edsa II last year. Specifically, they committed the "crime of coup d'état," which is punishable under a law passed in 1990. That was what brought the Erap administration down, an illegitimate and illegal power grab. Macasaet et al. say they have filed a case against them to see whether our laws are sufficiently strong to dissuade generals from harboring vaulting ambition and the rich and powerful from monopolizing those laws for their own ends.

Ombudsman Aniano Desierto's brilliant reply to this is that a coup is not a coup if it is successful. "In the legal profession, we have this principle that when rebels succeed, they suddenly become the legitimate authority." A reply that can only remind us that Desierto was one of the prosecutors of Jago, Marcos' dreaded military-legal organization, which, alongside Estelito Mendoza, who was the solicitor general, legalized pretty much everything the martial law government did.

That was of course what Marcos also did, mount a coup, and a most successful one. By Desierto's definition, that made it a perfectly legitimate authority. I am certain at least that the human rights lawyers will not feel alluded to when Desierto invokes the "we in the legal profession" clause to justify spreading ignorance.

So what's wrong with the picture?

Quite simply, they miss the point.

The point is that it doesn't greatly matter whether Reyes, Villanueva et al. attempted a coup or not, or whether they succeeded or not. The point is that the people rose to topple Erap. The people willed—and there is no higher authority, or source of legitimacy than that—to topple Erap. That is something we may not lose sight of. But which all this fuss about Reyes and company's participation in Edsa II inveigles us to do. What makes it irritating, apart from insidious, is that it gives the generals more importance than they deserve. It makes their decision to side with the people, or withdraw support from Erap, however you want to put it, the decisive element in Edsa II. It makes it the *sine qua non* of that grand event, the spark without which the act to end a tyranny would not have happened.

It's idiotic. More than the first Edsa, Edsa II was a patently spontaneous uprising by the people. It was the purer expression of "people power," it was the more literal expression of "people power." What muddled the issue in the first Edsa was the presence of mutinous military officers there. But even in that case, those officers were not the main authors of Edsa, they were its main beneficiaries. They did not save the people, the people saved them. They had holed up in Camp Aguinaldo after Marcos discovered their plot, and had it not been for the people who massed at Edsa to protect them, they would have been blasted to kingdom come by Fabian Ver. Ver was pressing Marcos to do it even after the throng came. After Edsa of course, Juan Ponce Enrile and company strutted around, or strode with Galils for the photo op, as though they had just carried out the second Liberation.

There was no such thing at Edsa II. The storyline was plainer, and it did not have the military playing a role in it except as extra. It was the people's organizations, the NGOs, the bishops, the opposition senators and congressmen and the public itself, stoked to disenchantment by the most potent of means, which was an impeachment trial that became more popular than the most popular *telenovela* at the time, that created it. It arose far more spontaneously than the first one, a sudden explosion of public outrage over the decision of Erap's loyalists in the impeachment court to vote down the opening of the second envelope, which would have damned Erap before the eyes of the world.

All the generals did was to come in when everything was pretty much over. All they contributed was gravy to the people's meat and potatoes. Even without their withdrawal of support for Erap, there would have been no way Erap could have continued governing the country. Business was on strike, offices were on strike, schools were on strike. The four nights of Edsa, which saw a crowd swelling with each passing hour, were writing on the wall. It could be read even by people who did not like reading.

That was when the most irritating and insidious, part of Edsa II happened, the generals trooping to Edsa at the 11th hour, on the fourth day of Edsa, one fine sunny Friday afternoon, bursting into the stage one by one and strutting there like they had just carried out another Liberation.

Reyes and company's action constituted a mutiny at that point? Who the hell cares?

It was superfluous. Macasaet et al. want to pin down the generals for mutiny, fine. I will applaud their efforts, particularly, to go by Desierto's standards, if they succeed. Though from where I stand the clearer case against them is scene-stealing or credit-grabbing. But none of it will invalidate the legitimacy of Edsa II, none of it will invalidate the way the people exercised their right to self-defense by removing Erap and his thugs from their faces. Of course all it did was thrust into office someone who least deserved it, and who continues to least deserve it—not least, by rewarding the military over and beyond the call of sycophancy, as though they truly had been the authors of Edsa II, and punishing the people by no end of politicking. Who is Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

But that is another story. Or suit.

* * *

Comments to dequiros@vasia.com

Why have two Muslim national holidays?

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

LATE last Thursday morning a Senate bill was passed on second reading which was illustrative of several things. Senate Bill No. 2026, authored by Senators Juan Flavier, Loren Legarda, Manuel Villar, Ramon Magsaysay, Gregorio Honasan, Edgardo Angara, Rodolfo Biazon and Noli de Castro, proposed to create two new national holidays, in addition to the current 10 in the amended Administrative Code. These are, to honor Eidul Fitr, the first day of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, and Eidul Adha, a 10th day in the month of Hajj or the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca wherein the Muslims pay homage to the supreme sacrifice of Patriarch Abraham.

* * *

It should be noted that these two new holidays are Muslim holidays, and the senators' obvious intention is to hasten the reconciliation with our Muslim brethren. But legislating them may defeat this purpose, considering that the Muslim population comprises only 5 percent of our people. By contrast, the Christians, who comprise 90 percent, can claim only four national holidays: Christmas, All Saints' Day, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. I would grant that honoring our Muslim brethren with one national holiday is long-overdue and Eidul Fitr could be the ideal occasion; but to give them two may overstrain a good intention, apart from the fact that we already have too many holidays. Isn't it more sensible to confine the second holiday, Eidul Adha, only to the Muslim region?

* * *

The buzz among the Senate media was that SB 2026 originally carried only Eidul Fitr as proposed by Angara, but that Majority Leader Legarda amended the bill to carry also Eidul Adha. Arriving late from Nueva Ecija that morning, she pushed her amendment despite some colleagues' suggestion to make the second holiday apply only to the Muslim region. Moreover, despite the absence of a quorum—the only ones present were Senate President Franklin Drilon, acting Majority Leader Flavier, Angara and Legarda—SB 2026 was quickly passed on second reading and is scheduled for third reading today. Curiously, three senators earlier present, Joker Arroyo, Panfilo Lacson and Vicente Sotto, disappeared before Legarda arrived and the buzz is that they wanted to avoid voting on the bill. It was apparent that Legarda was playing to the Muslim population, but it was also obvious that few senators were in the mood to question her amendment—perhaps for fear of displeasing the Muslims or the realization that in the Senate, Legarda gets her way.

* * *

From our dialogue with the leaders of the $22-billion electronics and semi-conductor industry here, the economy's engine that employs nearly 400,000 Filipino workers, it was plain that lots of problems exist. Notable is the lack of adequate infrastructure: specifically the traffic in the streets which affects even the three work shifts; the expensive power that this high power-consuming industry needs; and the less than adequate telecommunications. Philips GM George Bobin noted that in Europe, when a machine develops a problem, a maximum of six hours is needed to get it repaired; here, because of limited flights, it could take days.

The logical question to ask the industry leaders was, why are you here and not in China or somewhere else? Their answer: the highly trainable, disciplined workforce here whose learning curve is shorter than in other countries. The leaders stressed that for many years our human resources have been our only advantage over other countries but as Bobin pointed out, this advantage is shrinking as other countries catch up. To be sure, the industry conducts training of its people, and as Texas Instruments GM Bing Viera pointed out, his firm has 35 engineers training in the US on the average at any time. But our educational system has to also address the challenge hurled by the electronics industry to keep in step with global competitiveness. We can ignore this only at our peril.

* * *

We all have to strive to keep our sanity in these times, and the people are generally happy that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has taken time out to enjoy some outdoor sports, in so doing, also promoting ecotourism here. I like to relax by availing of good music whenever possible, and last Wednesday evening my husband and I were happy to attend a concert at the residence of German Ambassador Herbert Jess, which featured the outstanding Juilliard-trained Cebuana pianist Ingrid Sala Santamaria and the collaborative pianist, Rochester-trained Jonathan Arevalo Coo. Ingrid did Beethoven's Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 73, and Robert Schumann's Concerto in A minor, Op. 54., while Jonathan played the orchestra's part on a second piano. Ambassador Jess pointed out that it was a happy evening of German-Filipino relations, as two outstanding Filipino pianists interpreted two immortal German composers in a Makati living room adorned with paintings of German scenes by a well-known Filipino artist, Manny Baldemor, during his German sojourn.

* * *

Jess, who himself plays the piano, told me that the Steinway grand piano on which Ingrid played had just arrived last March and that in fact, another outstanding Filipina pianist, Nena del Rosario-Villanueva, had practiced on it for three days before she flew off to Paris to play at a special concert arranged by our ambassador to Paris, Hector Villaroel. Jess confessed that when he first got here less than two years ago, he realized he needed a piano in his living room to be able to hold musical soirees, and the German foreign ministry responded to his request posthaste by sending a Steinway grand. Listening to Ingrid's and Jonathan's duo-piano concert (the latter played on a rented Yamaha), we felt lucky that Herr Jess' foreign ministry was both culturally oriented and wealthy. Indeed his living room promises to be a mini-cultural center here.

Questions

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Noralyn Mustafa

OUT of the tangled web woven by the tales brought by Arlyn de la Cruz out of the woods, we should at least be able to unravel a fairly logical reconstruction of the 5 Ws and H of this rather bizarre episode in Philippine journalism.

There was, for example, the talk show "Off the Record" hosted by two of the most credible television personalities today, which had as guests the three persons who were closely involved in the "negotiations" and "rescue" of Arlyn.

Although apparently intended to clarify the mystery and many muddled issues relating to the abduction, it was obvious that as the show went on, the hosts were asking the questions tongue-in-cheek, and Sen. Loren Legarda—like a true journalist—was careful to preface or end her retelling with variations of "according to Arlyn."

And toward the end of the show, UP Prof. Mashur Jundam took it upon himself to inject some seriousness into the episode by reminding everyone of the "legitimate grievances" of the Bangsamoro.

Nonetheless, to those watching the show elsewhere, what emerged from the collective account of the guests was a story of high adventure that began in a classy Zamboanga City hotel, on to the island of Basilan, through the Sulu Sea and into the jungles of Jolo, and then the "secret mission" of a lady senator who plucked the hostaged journalist out of 98 days of captivity and flew her to freedom on a chartered plane into the glare of flashbulbs and television cameras.

But we who live in the geographical and social terrain where all these took place, had to suspend disbelief to keep a straight face throughout the show.

As the guests told it, Arlyn was abducted "on the shores of Sulu," aboard a "banca" bound for Tawi-Tawi to interview Abu Sayyaf leader Khadafy Janjalani who, according to Arlyn in her interview with Sen. Noli de Castro, was "an international terrorist," and whatever he had to say was of such international impact that she took that great risk to get the interview on cam.

But though they tried hard enough, Katrina Legarda and Randy David were unable to get the answers to the many questions surrounding Arlyn's kidnapping, and instead, things in fact became "curiouser and curiouser."

While, let us say, viewers in Manila would have visions of red sails in the sunset way out on the Sulu Sea sailing toward Tawi-Tawi beach, we in Jolo rued the harsh realities here that dulled even our otherwise natural sense of romance.

We knew, for one, that sailing on a banca at night, your chances of getting to Tawi-Tawi would be about as good as getting to Malacañang from Payatas on a paper boat.

But granting that Arlyn had not been waylaid and really got that interview with "Daf," that surely would have been the "dream interview" she had referred to once, because I have never, not once, heard Khadafy Janjalani say a word on video.

Like Sulu's Mujib Susukan, he was just a silent background present in all those video clips showing Abu Sabaya strutting his stuff.

And if she had two Abu Sayyaf guides, why in the world did she go to 103rd Brigade commander Col. Romeo Tolentino to ask for military escorts?

Most curious of all, if "Daf" was in Tawi-Tawi, what was she doing in Jolo?

For a fairly logical reconstruction based on the set of circumstances revealed in the account as told by Arlyn to Legarda and her "*ninang*" Cherry Covarrubias, we are inclined to give credence to the information from our usually reliable informant which I wrote about in a news story in January.

According to him, last Jan. 19 while in Basilan, Arlyn had received a lead that Janjalani and the hostaged couple Martin and Gracia Burnham had fled to Patikul in Jolo.

That was the story big enough to make her shake off the bothersome CBS crew with those perfectly timed text messages, don her favorite disguise of *abaya* and *hijab*, and board the night ferry to Jolo.

Which proved to be her undoing. Because while it is next to impossible to hide $2 million or 20,000 pieces of $100 bills in one's underwear, that is, if one is wearing the preferred lady journalist's attire of denim pants, there is enough space underneath the tent-like *abaya*.

But although there is no way we can refute Arlyn's own account of her ordeal in the hands of her captors because she has the privilege of the first person while we can only "reconstruct," still we can say that however "miserable" it might have been, it was nowhere near what the Sipadan hostages endured.

Anuling, from where Arlyn was "rescued," still evokes in me visions of my cousin Frank Shuck, late scion of the man who owned most of the "estate," riding a horse in his high leather boots, whistling "Oh, Rosemarie" as he surveyed his realm. It is just a walking distance from the town of Jolo and is situated right behind the PNP compound.

Talipao, where the "Sipadan 21" were kept for over four months, is a place where, even if you were let loose without blindfold, you would not find your way to your lover even if he sang "Indian Love Call" till he grew nodules in his throat.

Nonetheless, although it would be easy to dismiss her allegations against the MNLF integrees as mere retaliation, not taking them seriously would surely prove the government's—especially the AFP's—undoing.

* * *

Because of complaints about invitations, etc., not reaching me, my addresses: noralynmustafa@yahoo.com and noralynmustafa3@my.smart.com.ph, mail: 890 San Raymundo, Jolo, Sulu 7400.

Ople defends the Constitution

COMMENTARY

Dean Jorge Bocobo

SEN. Blas Ople opines at his weekly news conference that there may be a violation of the Constitution's dictum on the separation of Church and State in the administration's World Bank-sponsored program to mainstream private Islamic religious schools in Mindanao. Called "*madrasas*" or "*madaris*" in Arabic, these private schools account for some 14 percent of students in Mindanao. They are controversial because similar schools abroad have been accused of recruiting mujahedin in Pakistan and Afghanistan, suicide bombers in Palestine-Israel and terrorist fund-raising in the United States.

But I think the senator is wrong and the administration is right in seeking to integrate such schools into the mainstream education system, precisely so they will not be cynically hijacked and used by al-Qaida and other people wedded to terrorist violence as a strategy and tactic. If Islamic schools in Mindanao are being perverted for purposes that dishonor Islam and threaten the nation and the world, ignoring or marginalizing them is sure to be the wrong thing.

ARMM Vice Gov. Wahid Mutilan, (ARMM's education department head, a doctor in Islamic theology of the Ulama League of the Philippines, and former Lanao del Sur governor) explains the administration's mainstreaming program to accredit the private Islamic schools with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the national Department of Education (DepEd). He says that it is very much what happens with private Catholic schools.

The initial thrust would consist of curriculum review and development to "upgrade, synchronize and harmonize" the *madaris* curriculum with that of the formal education system. Subjects like Philippine history, culture and language would be introduced, along with English and information technology, while fully preserving the Islamic traditions, teachings and culture of the schools.

As part of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's broader priority education program for Mindanao, called Edukmin, assistance in the perpetual problems of school buildings, desks, textbooks and other basic needs, have also been promised to these Islamic schools. To which Ople objects on constitutional grounds, saying that "government cannot promote any religion or pay for instruction in a particular faith."

Ah, but what a feast of irony our country is! I hope the good senator from Bulacan will also include in his future crusades the following instances of interest.

Daily Catholic Mass at the main public hall of the DepEd building in Pasig City, is a flagrant and daily violation of the Constitution, in the very heart of the national education system. But it's not unique. The same thing happens in practically every major national government office, including Malacañang, Congress and the Supreme Court. There, idolatrous and powerful icons of the Catholic majority are flagrantly and callously displayed in wanton disrespect of every decent democratic instinct for fairness and neutrality in the touchy matter of faith and religion.

Am I attacking the Catholic Church? Of course not. I am defending it. For I have seen Sto. Niños bigger than Joe de Venecia, and Mama Mary paintings to rival Rosanna Roces' pulchritude, on public display in government offices, as Jesus becomes body and blood at noon time. Nearby, miraculous transformations of a less pious nature transpire. The profane use of Catholic liturgy and symbolism in these government institutions demeans both our democracy and the Catholic religion.

And how about DepEd Memorandum Order No. 17, dated Feb. 12, 2002? It is entitled "Allowing the Distribution of the Holy Bible for Free to Public Secondary and Elementary Schools." I can see some benefits to distributing the Bible to public schools, especially if it is the delicious King James version, which is the best possible English textbook for our semi-literate millions.

But of interest to Ople may be how the memorandum order defends this action with an appeal to Article XIV Section 3 of the Constitution, which provides that "*At the option expressed in writing by the parents or guardians, religion shall be allowed to be taught their children and wards in public elementary and high schools within the regular class hours by instructors designated or approved by the religious authorities of the religion to which the children or wards belong, without additional cost to the Government.*"

The memorandum order states that, "In this connection, an association of Christian business and professional men is offering to distribute for free the Holy Bible to all schools, colleges and universities in the Philippines." It further directs all public school principals to allow the group's activities.

Hmmm...Since the Memo studiously appeals to the Constitution for justification, it must need justification. But it seems the order does not find it in the quoted provision. Where is the written permission from parents allowing an unidentified "organization of Christian business and professional men," unprecedented access to the public schools?

The memo sets a dangerous precedent because it cannot limit such extraordinary access to public schools to just this one organization. Other questions can be raised. What exactly does the memo mean by "the Holy Bible"? Whose version is being allowed? Catholic, Protestant? Can the Koran be distributed? How about Aglipayan, Iglesia ni Cristo, Protestant and Buddhist material? How about atheistic tracts? Who, exactly, can distribute "Bibles" in public schools and what else are they allowed to do while "distributing"?

Perhaps Senator Ople would care to investigate.

* * *

Comments to deanjbocobo@yahoo.com

Criticisms by other local newspapers

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica

THERE are no sacred cows in this country insofar as the press is concerned. Anything is fair game for reporters, editors and columnists, including themselves and the newspapers they represent.

I may be wrong, but why do I get the feeling that journalists are in their element when they write articles that are critical of their fellow journalists? Editorials that take issue with the position taken by other newspapers seem to be better written than those that come out on ordinary days.

A reader, Priscilla del Valle of Laguna, who reads other newspapers during Sundays, noticed that some columnists and writers of these newspapers occasionally take potshots at the INQUIRER.

She observed that "other newspapers have criticized you for being anti-Erap and pro-Gloria. Many times, they say your news reports are biased, irresponsible and meant to serve the personal agenda of the Prietos."

The reader further said, "What I do not understand is how come you do not answer the criticisms by those newspapers and their columnists? Don't you have anybody who monitors other newspapers to check if they are saying bad things about you?

"It is important for you to answer those criticisms in order to protect the credibility and prestige of your newspaper.

"I also noticed in one instance that a newspaper columnist attacked you for not acting on the complaint of bias a reader made against your newspaper.

"The columnist said a true ombudsman should attend to all complaints and report to the readers the action he has taken on them. He said that if you do not do that, you are ineffective and the INQUIRER should stop claiming it is serious in listening to the complaints of its readers.

"My question is why don't you discuss in your column the complaints and letters you receive so we know what you have done to them? It is important for us to know how other readers view the news published in your newspaper."

Daily review

Ideally, the INQUIRER should try to know what the competition is doing. Know thy "enemy," the saying goes.

In the television industry, it is common knowledge that the two major TV stations, Channels 2 and 7, monitor each other's programs to learn their techniques and pick ideas they can use to improve their respective ratings.

I seriously doubt, however, if a similar arrangement is possible for the newspapers. As of latest count, there are, more or less, 40 newspapers circulating all over the country, eight of which (the INQUIRER included) are broadsheets with nationwide circulation.

For practical and financial reasons, the INQUIRER has not assigned any member of its staff the task of going through all the broadsheets every day to find out if they contain articles that are critical of it. The reporters and editors are just too busy meeting their deadlines to worry about unsavory comments coming from competing newspapers.

If at all, the INQUIRER learns about not-so-pleasant write-ups about it from readers who go out of their way to call and pass on the information, or when an editor or reporter accidentally reads them while browsing the newspapers at the library.

Call it self-confidence or smugness, but the editors hardly lose sleep over those articles. Criticisms that the INQUIRER is "biased, anti-Erap, pro-Gloria, pro-Ramos, pro-Big Business" or what-have-you are considered par for the course. It comes with the territory.

There will always be people who will be unhappy, one way or the other, with the contents of the INQUIRER. For newspapers with set political ideologies, any article published by the INQUIRER that runs counter to their beliefs is expected to invite a strong reaction from them.

The time and effort that may be spent looking for and answering articles that are critical of the INQUIRER can be put to better use meeting the publication requirements of the newspaper.

To date, I do not recall the INQUIRER coming out with an editorial in reaction to a critical article that appeared in another newspaper. It's either because none has been serious enough to merit a response or the editorial staff think the newspaper concerned is merely trying to get attention at the INQUIRER's expense.

Now, let's go to the portion of the reader's letter on the handling of the readers' complaints.

Sorry, but it is physically impossible for me to enumerate, much less discuss, all the complaints or letters I receive from the readers. If they relate to minor matters, such as, wrong spelling, inaccurate description or typographical errors, I simply write to the reader and apologize for the error. Listing them down will make this column look like a laundry list.

But if I find the subject of the letter worthy of the readers' attention, then I take it up in this column. So far, this system has worked and I do not think there are compelling reasons to change it.

Suggestions

Last week, I received two suggestions on how the INQUIRER can improve the quality of its contents. The first letter, which came from a retired English professor from the Visayas, thinks the best way to minimize grammatical errors is to require the reporter or editor concerned to pay a fine for each error committed.

She believes putting pressure on the pockets of the reporters or editors will force them to be extra careful in the preparation of their articles and the readers will get the satisfaction of reading a newspaper that is world-class in terms of grammar.

This early, I foresee that if this proposal is taken up with the editorial staff, it will invite a howl of protest whose decibel will breach the limits of the capacity of the human ear. Next suggestion, please.

The second letter was in reaction to my earlier column about the comics page ("Offensive comic strip"). The reader, a professor of UP Los Baños, wrote that "as most serious readers are wont to do, after going through the Opinion pages and scanning the news stories that are usually depressing, I turn to the entertainment section in the hope of lifting my spirits and tickling my sense of humor.

"PDI would perhaps do well to enlist its readers in passing judgment on which comic strips to retain and which ones to terminate. This may be achieved by occasionally conducting a survey among PDI readers in evaluating with ratings from 10 to 0 the PDI comic strips and thus be guided accordingly."

I have endorsed the reader's letter to the INQUIRER's art director for her information and appropriate action. Assuming she acts on it favorably, the question that has to be addressed is how the survey should be conducted.

Any suggestions from the readers ?

* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Irresponsible TV show on dogs

UP TO NOW, I still can't get over the horror of that "I-Witness" TV episode last April 15. According to scientists, dogs have the equivalent intelligence of a 2-year-old child. I believe that to be true, since I too have a dog, and I can attest to that degree of intelligence in my pet. That being the case, it's like witnessing the torture and murder of a child.

The show depicted the slaughtering of dogs for their meat as an acceptable practice when motivated by poverty and tradition, thus justifying the violation of existing laws and subjecting an animal to such unspeakable cruelties. The producer should look into the dog-meat syndicates whose members are certainly not poverty-stricken Filipinos.

We have an Animal Welfare Act as well as MMC Ordinance 8202, which prohibits the killing of dogs for meat. The economic condition of a social group does not exempt them from the law. Criminal acts committed by the poor are no more acceptable than those committed by the rich. A small-time drug pusher who peddles his poisons is just as guilty as the rich drug lord.

The show likewise portrayed tradition as a cause. Tradition is an inherited or established way of thinking, feeling and doing things, but it is by no means a constant. Just as civilizations evolve, so do one's perception of what is acceptable and what is not. As civilization becomes more enlightened, it begins to see things from a new perspective.

An earlier episode on pit-bulls, by Che-Che Lazaro was more of an example of investigative journalism—using a spy camera to expose the participants of a criminal activity. The "Askal" episode of "I-Witness" on the other hand, did a big disservice to our suffering native dogs and to those Filipinos who believe that all creatures of God deserve to be treated with kindness, compassion and dignity. This is a universal conviction shared by many decent people around the world, and is not just some elitist persuasion. I have many squatter neighbors who, in spite of their harsh life, still managed to express affection for their family dogs or cats.

"Askal" presented an orgy of extreme violence right in front of children—exposing these impressionable minds to one of the ugliest deeds of their elders. Shows like this are often shown in the late hours of the night because of their mature contents, and yet that particular scene where a helpless dog was brutally murdered, was staged live in front of all those innocent eyes. This is the height of irresponsibility and hypocrisy.

According to the National Meat Inspection Commission (NMIC), dog meat is "unfit for human consumption." Media have a responsibility to help educate our people on this potential health hazard—unless they believe the findings of the NMIC with respect to dog meat to be false and unwarranted.

Many defenders of dog-eating often ask this stupid question: "Why dogs? What's so special about dogs?"

Perhaps these people should take the trouble to interview Omar Eduardo Rivera whose dog, Dorado, saved him from certain death, during the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. They should also interview James Crane and the other 967 people whom Daisy (Crane's dog) rescued from the WTC. In the Philippines, there are numerous accounts about dogs' loyalty and heroism. The question is, why put on the menu a being that has always been associated with helping and saving human lives?

Our media should restrain themselves from featuring unnecessary gory and violent scenes, even if some see these as what the public wants. We already have enough garbage in the form of sleazy tabloids. Why this propensity to feed the public with pictures of mutilated bodies (animals and humans)? Is it about selling papers and ratings?

During the entire coverage of the rescue effort, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, there were hardly any such pictures shown on TV or published in newspapers by the American media, in spite of the thousands of dead bodies. Now, that is the kind of media we would like to see.

—OSCAR LEI, 119-B
Benavidez St.,
San Juan,
Metro Manila

A controversy with no real grounds

THE CONTROVERSY regarding my appointment as chief of hospital III of the Mayor Hilarion A. Ramiro Sr. Regional Training and Teaching Hospital, Ozamiz City was covered in a report last May 5, 2002. I am compelled to write to set the record straight so that the rare honor placed on me by Health Secretary Manuel M. Dayrit's appointing me as chief of hospital will not be wrapped up in the innuendoes and controversy presently being raised by some who are not happy with my appointment. I am also concerned that the name and image of the Department of Health and its processes will be sullied by what's happening.

I have always believed that commitment, dedication, hard work and the exercise of the highest degree of professional ethics and morality are the true measures for one to deserve the trust and the honor of public office. In the past 23 years as a public servant, I have tried to give the best I could to these standards of service. I worked my way to where I am now, having worked in 25- and 75-bed capacity hospitals in Tawi-Tawi, Labuan, Zamboanga City, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte and Dapitan City. In all these years, I have never been accused of any anomalous act, irregularities or shadowy transactions in all my dealings that would displease God, my family and the people whom I serve. I also worked hard to earn my academic credentials and I have maintained a high standard of efficiency, dedicated work and integrity in government service. I took the Management Aptitude Test Battery (MATB) examination given by the Career Executive Service (CES) Board in Manila which was followed by an interview conducted by the 3rd Level Selection Placement and Promotion Board of the DOH. May I humbly say that my appointment was the result of proper deliberation, considering that I was selected to head this hospital based on my qualifications and merits, principally.

May 6 was the third day since I assumed office and as early as now, I can honestly say that whatever it was that may have caused the outcry against my appointment may all have been because of a common and shared desire among them (and me) to perpetuate the best interests of the service. I was most elated by the response of our medical, nursing and administrative staff and personnel who signified their intention to work and cooperate with me to pursue our mission in caring for the sick and to further the good work started by my predecessors. The smooth and peaceful transition last May 2, 2002 belies speculations that services in this hospital will be affected by the entry of an "outsider" since we managed to clarify issues and settle differences in the most civil manner without any ill-feelings. I am proud and happy to be a part of this big family of professional career-oriented men and women.

As any other human being, I was naturally hurt by insinuations that I got my position because of mere technicalities in the appointment process. But there is no rancor in my heart against my detractors. I can understand and hold only admiration for the staff and personnel of this hospital who have worked hard to make this institution something which the DOH can be proud of. I am humbled by the experience and now that I have the opportunity to serve, I intend to lead with the highest degree of competence, efficiency and morality.

—ROMEO A. ONG, MD, MHA,
chief of hospital III,
Mayor Hilarion A. Ramiro
Sr. Regional Training and
Teaching Hospital,
Ozamiz City

Help Nueva Ecija artists

HAVING seen the passing of our two national artists, Lucio San Pedro and Levi Celerio, I cannot help but think of our many other artists who are still alive.

Turn your radio on at 9:15 every evening to 684 on the broadcast band and you will get a program on dwJJ in Cabunatuan City where almost all of our old Tagalog songs are still being sung. And what joy you would surely feel to hear pre-war compositions being performed by our country folks and artists.

There is the *reyna ng kundiman* of Nueva Ecija Doray Flores, Luciana Catolico, Lilia Bulong, Lourdes Catabas, Franky Dizon, Amado Cabrera, Sal Benosa, Mar Catacutan, Anny Madrid, Carmen Dizon and many other talented singers whom I will not trade for Pilita Corrales, Imelda Papin, Regine Velasquez or any other singer in Metro Manila who have gained not only applause but also material prominence because they have the resources to promote themselves.

My point here is that if we need to recognize our artists for their talent, would it not be better if we do it now while they are still around? Many of them are poor and do not only need recognition but financial help also. Our artists in Nueva Ecija, for example, keep on singing into the night to preserve our culture but barely receive what is due them.

—RICARDO LIMPIN, Agusu,
Mabalacat, Pampanga

But not at the expense of our native tongue

THIS is in reaction to the letter of T.B. Abayan last May 7, 2002. It saddened me that he said that Tagalog (Filipino) is good but it will not make us globally competitive. We need English to survive. This was in relation to a program launched recently by the Marikina City mayor called "Speak English" in order to make Marikina City residents competitive in the world job market.

The letter sender even averred that this is a laudable program other government units should emulate.

It is my honest opinion that other countries like Japan became highly industrialized because its citizens spoke their own native tongue. There is a feeling of patriotism and love of country in its citizens.

When they were still alive, nationalists like Manuel L. Quezon, Claro M. Recto, Lorenzo M. Tañada, former Rep. Roning Mercado and others fought in Congress against all odds for the existence and preservation of our native language, Filipino.

I disagree with Abayan that English should be our primary language and that Filipino should be secondary in order to make us globally competitive. A famous hero once said, *"Ang hindi magmahal sa sariling wika ay daig pa ang hayop at malansang isda."*

—RAY M. ANGELES, past
grand knight, Knights of
Columbus, Nuestra Señora del
Carmen Council 8693,
P. Buhangin, Sta. Maria,
Bulacan

Taiwan's Chen has yet to earn his stripes

NEWS ANALYSIS

Benjamin Kang Lim

TAIPEI—Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian plans to mark the halfway point of his four-year presidency by giving a rubdown to residents of an old people's home on Monday.

But perhaps it is Chen's image that needs a rubdown, some analysts say.

After two years in office, the president has been unable to dispel doubts that he has what it takes to govern the fractious island and break the ice with giant neighbor China.

Monday's photo opportunity might briefly divert media attention from the island's economic woes. It also says a lot about Taiwan's youngest president, who behaves like a man trying to please all the people all the time.

Try as he might, he can't and as a result he is not as focused as he should be on running Taiwan, analysts say.

"He wants to look after every shade of the political spectrum from left to right," Soochow University political scientist Liu Bih-rong said, referring to pro-independence fundamentalists and China apologists who dream of reunification with the mainland.

China does not trust Chen, suspecting that he wants to push Taiwan toward independence, while critics say he spends too much time wooing voters and not enough on fixing the economy or sorting out ties with Beijing.

"Chen Shui-bian has a lot to prove," said Wang Yeh-li, chair of the department of political science at the private Tunghai University.

"Many of his major policies were rashly formulated," Wang said of Chen's policies on China, foreign affairs and economics.

"They lack depth and substance. Most of it is empty talk."

Chen, 51, has not been helped by a dearth of experienced economic experts in his party's ranks and a razor-thin edge in parliament, whose popularity ratings resemble a roller-coaster ride.

A survey by private cable news network TVBS last week showed Chen's popularity rating rebounded to 51 percent from 41 percent a year ago. That compared with a high of 77 percent one month after he took office and a low of 34 percent in February 2001 when unemployment hit a record high.

Chen also came close to being sacked over a nuclear power plant row during his bumpy first year in office.

His improving ratings may reflect the nascent recovery in the battered economy, which shrank 1.91 percent last year, in Taiwan's first full year of contraction. Unemployment hit a record 4.57 percent.

The numbers shocked Taiwan voters used to years of strong growth and doubly disappointed them because China's economy was expanding at a healthy clip just across the Taiwan Strait.

Chen, who came to office as standard-bearer of a party that favors independence, has also fuelled the suspicions of Beijing, which steadfastly believes Taiwan is part of China and should eventually reunite with the motherland, by force if necessary.

While he has made peace overtures to Beijing, he has also tested China's patience with incremental steps aimed at giving the island a separate new identity.

These steps have kept a distrustful Beijing guessing whether he is playing to the electorate or playing for keeps.

China watchers are betting Beijing would rather wait and see if Chen is reelected before deciding whether to deal with him.

Chen blamed the opposition and China for many of his woes, but is out of excuses now that his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) controls parliament and Chinese intimidation, such as war games in waters around Taiwan, has stopped.

A survey by Taipei's American Chamber of Commerce showed roughly 40 percent of those polled believed the cabinet had done worse than before and more than half said the same of parliament.

Critics also say Chen's foreign policy is too US-centric. Taiwan, they warned, was a pawn and could be embroiled in any punch-up between Beijing and Washington, the island's main arms supplier and trading partner.

Strong US support for Taiwan has also emboldened Chen to push for a stronger national identity for Taiwan, while stopping well short of anything resembling moves toward independence.

Chen's attempts to edge to the center of the political spectrum have been stymied by his most ardent supporters, who demand nothing short of independence from China.

"The only thing he can boast about is bilateral relations has not worsened, but we don't see his vision," political scientist Liu said. "The only thing he can do in terms of mainland policy is damage control."

For now, all Chen can do is try to continue pleasing the political factions and press the flesh with voters.

For a man who looks like he is permanently on the campaign trail, scrubbing tires at a car wash and autographing pictures will be good practice for 2004, when Taiwan's two biggest opposition parties are likely to join together against him.

An earlier survey showed Chen would lose his bid for reelection if opposition leaders James Soong and Lien Chan, who finished second and third respectively in the 2000 polls, form a joint ticket in 2004.

Reuters

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SBMA chief should stop politicking

THIS refers to the letter of Felicito C. Payumo, chair and administrator of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority last May 16, 2002.

It is unfortunate that Payumo should try to link the Gordons (presumably Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon and his wife, Olongapo City Mayor Kate Gordon) to the raid by the PNP Narcotics Group on two vessels and a warehouse at the naval supply depot of the Subic Bay Freeport last May 7-10. He tried to blame the Gordons simply because of my presence in court in a hearing related to the raid.

I was in Branch 72 on May 10, 2002 because I had an appointment with prosecutor Raymond Viray. When I went to his office, I was told that Viray was in Branch 72. I waited for him in the court because he was representing the state in the hearing of a *habeas corpus* case. As I listened to the direct examination of Viray, I came to know that the case was connected with the raid conducted in Subic, which was in the news for that week. I waited for Viray until the hearing was concluded.

Granting that I was in the court because of the hearing of the drug case, I don't see anything wrong with it. There was nothing unusual about my being in the court because I am a lawyer. Secondly, I was interested in this case because I want to put a stop to drug trafficking. How many times has a crime been committed because of drugs? How many lives have been lost and dreams shattered because of drugs?

Payumo should stop politicking and instead just do his job as chair of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority. He should stop blaming the Gordons for everything that has gone wrong in Subic. He is now in charge. He should not shirk responsibility by tossing the blame to somebody else.

—ELLEN AGUILAR, city legal officer,
Olongapo City

No longer with Copa

SOME three weeks ago, several articles were written in your paper about a group "planning a coup and setting up a junta." As I fully expected, after all the information had been ferreted out, there was really so much ado over nothing. I write this letter, however, to correct any misinformation which the articles might have conveyed to your readers that I am a member of the Council for Philippine Affairs (Copa). In fairness to Copa and myself, I am no longer a member of Copa, having left the organization shortly after Edsa II.

—CESAR N. SARINO, 427 Country Club
Drive, Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa City

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

US sees 'enhanced' threat of new al-Qaida attack

WASHINGTON—US intelligence officials have detected "enhanced activity" that points to a potential new attack against the United States or American interests abroad, a White House official said on Saturday.

The FBI also warned of a possible plot by Saudi-born militant Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network to detonate bombs in apartment buildings in the United States.

The comments came as The New York Times reported that US intelligence agencies have intercepted a series of messages among al-Qaida operatives indicating the group is attempting to launch an attack as big as or bigger than the one on Sept. 11.

Quoting unidentified intelligence and law enforcement officials, the Times characterized the communications as vague but disturbing. The intercepted messages are so general that they have left President George W. Bush and US counterterrorism officials uncertain about the timing, location or method in this potential attack, the Times reported.

"There has been information of concern, enhanced activity of concern," the White House official, who asked not to be quoted by name, told Reuters. The information has been detected in recent weeks and months, the official said.

"Certainly we are always concerned about the possibility of a terrorist attack. The president and senior administration officials and the vice president, just a couple of days ago, have told the country that there always exists the possibility of a terrorist attack against the country, and the country's interests. We as American citizens want to be vigilant, but also live our lives." *Reuters*

REUTERS

PROTEST PROCESSION

Orthodox nuns pray as they take part in a procession of protest in central Kiev, June 14, 2001. The established Orthodox Church in Russia says it is alarmed by Roman Catholic missionary foot soldiers actively poaching souls from the vast flock of Orthodox believers.

US senator hits FBI for 'failing the American people'

WASHINGTON—US Senate Intelligence Committee Vice Chairman Richard Shelby said on Saturday the FBI "failed the American people" in its handling of key information about potential attacks prior to Sept. 11.

The comments to CNN intensified scrutiny of Bush administration handling of intelligence data on suspected terrorists in the United States months before the hijack attacks on New York and Washington. The US blames the Sept. 11 strikes on militants linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

While questions persisted about what President George W. Bush and senior government officials might have known about potential threats, developments this week illustrated the government had varying degrees of information.

Bush, whose popularity appears to be unaffected by the criticism, last August was alerted in his daily CIA intelligence briefing to the possibility of a hijacking by al-Qaida. The White House said it was non-specific information and stressed nothing indicated planes would be used as missiles.

But the FBI acknowledged that a memorandum written by an agent in Phoenix in July urged superiors to investigate eight men of Arab descent who were attending US flight schools in the Phoenix area and might be connected to Osama bin Laden.

That information was not shared with other agencies and apparently was not investigated more closely. *Reuters*

Al-Qaida owns bombing in Tunisia

CAIRO—A man identified as an al-Qaida leader has claimed responsibility for last month's attack on a Tunisian synagogue that killed 19 people and vowed to attack Americans soon, a pan-Arab newspaper reported Saturday.

The London-based Asharq al-Awsat said it interviewed Abdel Azeem al-Muhajir, whom it described as a "senior military leader" of al-Qaida, in the western Pakistani mountains near the border with Afghanistan. The newspaper did not say when the interview was conducted.

Al-Muhajir told the paper that the April 11 truck-bombing of Ghriba synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba "was carried out by brothers in the al-Qaida network."

A source in Afghanistan said Al-Muhajir is also known as Abu Bilal Al Muhajir and is a Palestinian of Jordanian nationality. The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Al-Muhajir was a member of the al-Qaida network, but was a midlevel administrator, rather than a top commander.

Israeli and US officials have said that are indications that the attack in Tunisia was linked to al-Qaida, although no definite evidence has been found so far. *AP*

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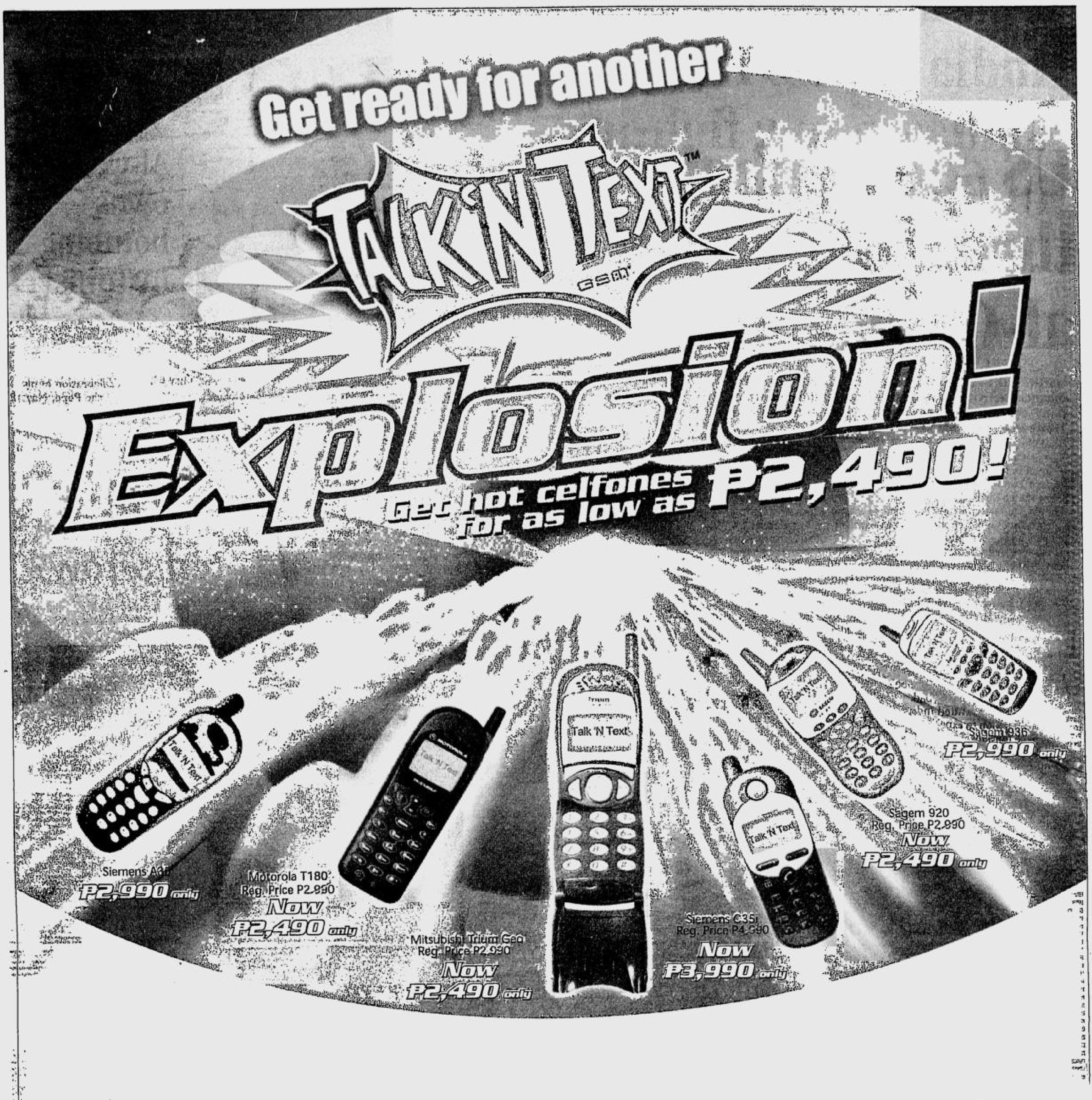

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India expels Pakistan ambassador; fighting in Kashmir escalates

NEW DELHI—India ousted Pakistan's ambassador Saturday as cross-border shelling between the nuclear-armed neighbors escalated in the disputed Kashmir province, heightening fears that the South Asian rivals are on the brink of war.

Thousands of people were fleeing their homes as Indian and Pakistani troops used heavy weaponry to target each other.

The diplomatic move was announced after Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee met with top Cabinet ministers, military and intelligence chiefs to decide India's response to an Islamic militant attack in Kashmir that killed 34 people on Tuesday. The Himalayan region has been at the root of two of the three wars fought by India and Pakistan since their independence from Britain in 1947.

India blamed Pakistan for the suicide attack on an army base in which most of those killed were the wives and children of Indian soldiers.

India's External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said as New Delhi no longer had an ambassador in Islamabad, the Pakistani ambassador would have to leave.

"For the sake of parity of representation between the two countries, the high commissioner of Pakistan, (who) is currently in India, (will) be required to return to Islamabad," he told reporters.

Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Pakistan's high commissioner for five years, has been given one week to return to Islamabad.

Pakistan responded indignantly, saying India's decision to expel its envoy would only increase tensions.

"Efforts should be made to reduce tension, and Pakistan, despite this action of India, which has disappointed us, will continue to strive to resolve all issues with India through peaceful negotiations and through peaceful means," said Aziz Ahmad Khan,

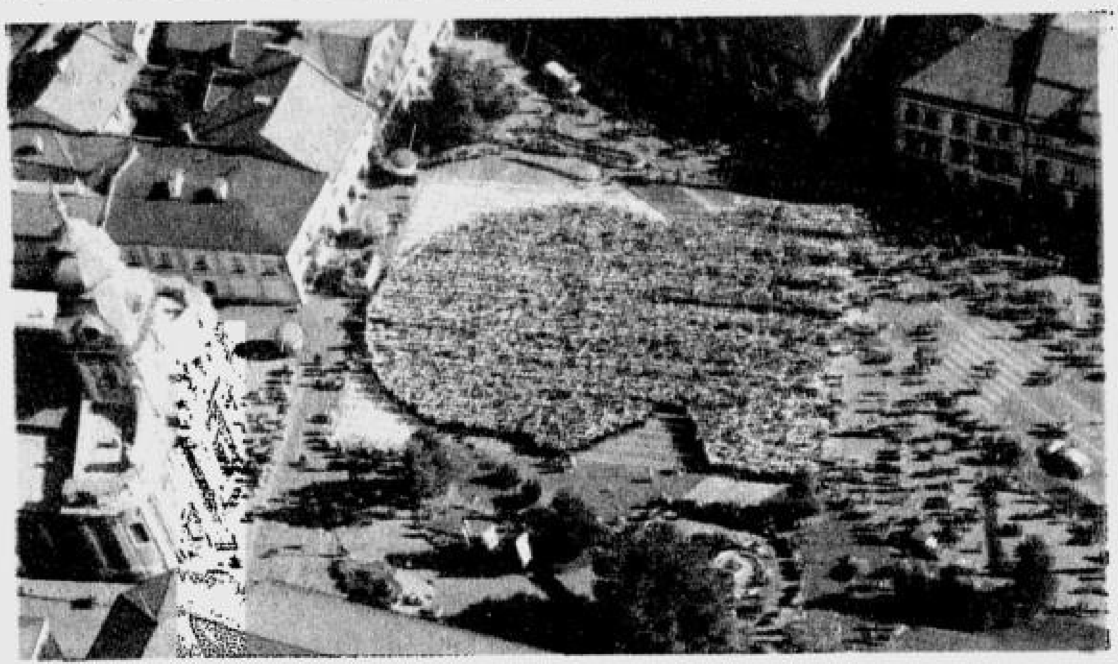
Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

Analysts in India said the current crisis was the worst since an 11-week border conflict in the Kargil sector of Kashmir in 1999. The Indian army said hundreds of Pakistani soldiers had crossed the cease-fire line that divides Kashmir between the two countries and attacked Indian military posts along the Himalayan ridge.

"We're facing probably the most severe crisis since Kargil. The Indian public and the strategic community are agreed that Pakistan has to be made to pay for such roguish behavior," said Amitabh Mattoo, a member of India's National Security Advisory Board.

Vajpayee vowed to respond to the attack and in a special parliamentary debate Friday, lawmakers demanded tough military action.

Saturday's scaling down of ties was expected to be followed by other diplomatic initiatives, Mattoo said. *AP*



HAPPY 82ND BIRTHDAY

Thousands of people form a human face portrait of Pope John Paul II in celebration of his 82nd birthday at the town square of Wadowice, Poland, the birth place of the Pope, May 18.

AFP

S. Korea's Kim won't quit despite arrest of son

SEOUL—South Koran President Kim Dae-jung vowed Sunday to see out his term in office despite the detention of his third son on accusations of taking more than $1.2 million in bribes.

Less than two weeks before standing in the international spotlight for the start of the World Cup, the 76-year-old leader expressed his shame at seeing his son Kim Hong-Gul formally arrested and detained on Saturday night.

Presidential spokesperson Park Sun-sook said in a statement: "It's very regrettable."

"Now the court will judge all issues and President Kim will devote himself to state affairs without being swayed."

A court issued a warrant on Saturday night to send Kim Hong-gul to a detention center south of Seoul where his father was held several times as a political prisoner in the 1970s and 1980s.

The son of President Kim's predecessor Kim Young-sam was also held at the same detention center after being caught on similar charges.

"I am deeply sorry for causing troubles to the nation," the 38-year-old son told journalists as he was led away from the court. He faces a jail term of up to five years if found guilty at trial. A verdict is expected before a presidential election is held in December.

Prison authorities said the president's son was reading books after being put in solitary confinement for security reasons. *AFP*

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Hamas says it may take part in Palestinian polls

JERUSALEM—The militant Islamic group Hamas left open the door Saturday to its participation in planned Palestinian elections.

The extremist group is second in popularity only to Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement and could post a formidable challenge at a time when his popularity is at a low point.

Hamas also vowed Saturday to continue suicide attacks against Israeli civilians, saying it would not stop the killings until Israeli soldiers halted attacks against Palestinian civilians.

In the West Bank Saturday, Israeli soldiers opened fire on a car that tried to run a roadblock, the army said. One Arab passenger was killed when the car flipped over.

Three Palestinians were killed on Friday, including two who tried to infiltrate into Jewish settlements to carry out attacks.

Meanwhile, 15 Palestinian Cabinet ministers offered to resign Saturday, officials said, a gesture to spur reforms in the Palestinian Authority, headed by Arafat.

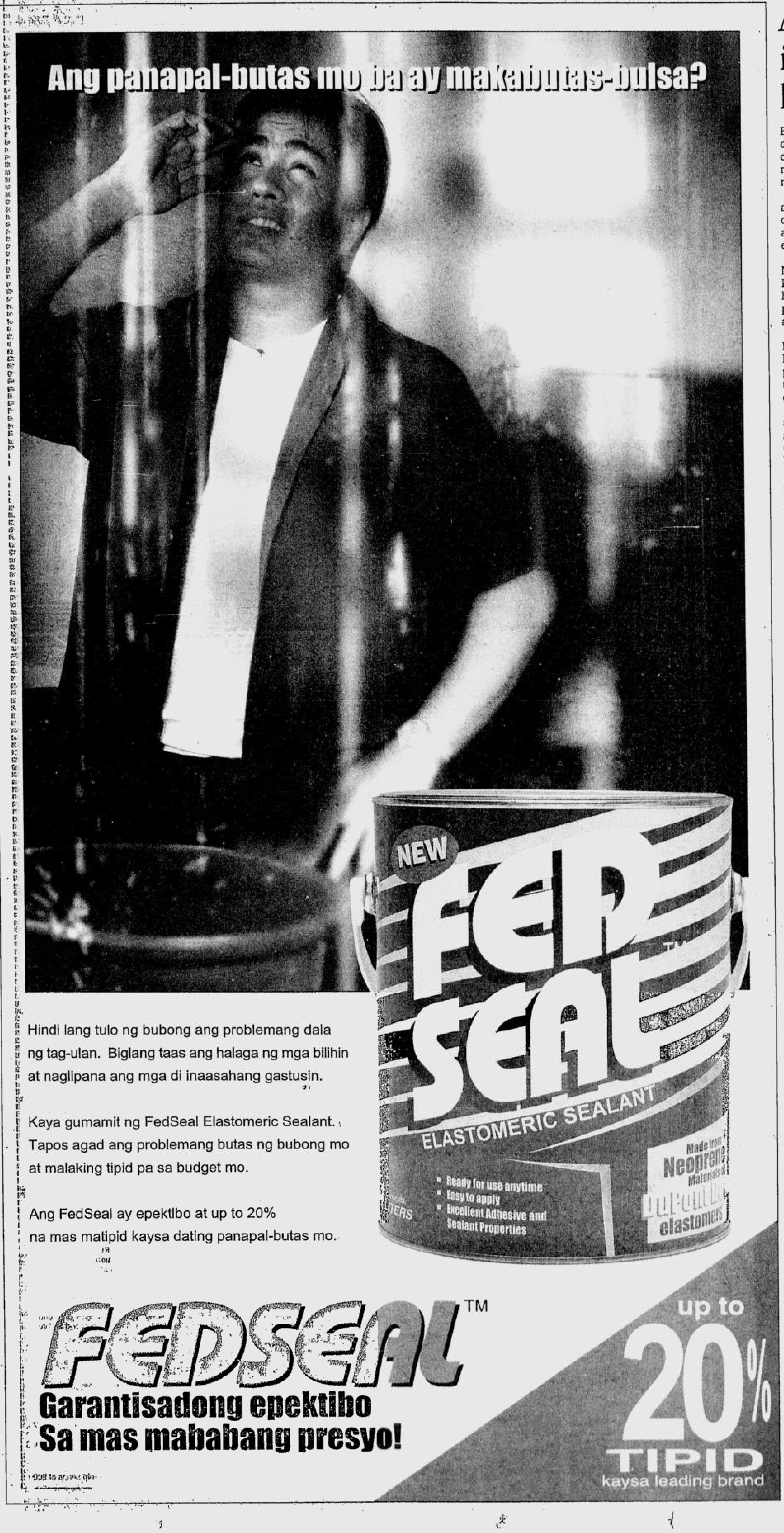
The Cabinet ministers signed a letter offering to present their resignations, the Palestinian officials said, but none had actually resigned, and the letter was not presented to Arafat.

On Thursday, the Palestinian parliament put together a list of reform demands, including disbanding the Cabinet and calling elections for president and parliament.

Minister Hassan Asfour said the ministers would resign if Arafat thought that would spur reforms. "We will follow President Arafat's decision," he told The Associated Press.

Arafat has promised to hold general elections but later linked the balloting to an Israeli withdrawal from positions in the Palestinian territories. Aides said the Israelis must first dismantle dozens of roadblocks that make travel inside of the West Bank extremely difficult. They also said that Israeli soldiers would have to be pulled back from positions that ring Palestinian cities.

The elections are expected within six months if the Palestinian conditions are met, they said. *AP*



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Allied forces in Afghanistan hunt militants

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan—Hundreds of coalition soldiers backed by US warplanes combed through the rugged eastern Afghan mountains on Saturday for suspected Islamic militants who had fired on coalition forces.

The US army said one of its AC-130 gunship aircraft had killed about 10 people in the new operation against remnants of the al-Qaida and Taliban but rejected reports it had mistakenly hit a wedding party.

A 1,000-strong force led by British Royal Marines were air-lifted to the turbulent Khost-Paktia region for Operation Condor, aimed at hunting down a "substantial" force of suspected al-Qaida and Taliban militants in the area, a coalition spokesperson said.

US warplanes and helicopters took off from Bagram air base, the headquarters of the US-led led coalition, throughout Saturday to support the ground troops as howling winds battered the decrepit airfield, used by the Soviets during their occupation of Afghanistan.

"We have gone out in support. If we come across al-Qaida, we will engage, we are searching," Royal Marines spokesperson Lt. Col. Ben Curry told reporters at the allied headquarters inside Bagram, north of Kabul.

Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) agency reported on Friday that US planes had pounded Bul Khil village in Khost province for several hours on Thursday night, after a US helicopter crew mistook traditional firing at a wedding for an attack.

But US army spokesperson Bryan Hilferty said the air attack was launched after coalition forces came under fire from suspected Islamic militants belonging to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network and their Taliban allies.

"About 10 people were killed in Thursday night's bombing on an uninhabited ridge line," he told reporters at Bagram.

"I believe the report about the wedding is all wrong... We believe this is an al-Qaida and Taliban area. There were people on the ridge line who fired heavy weapons on an Australian patrol and then chased them. We have a right to self defense."

Hilferty said one enemy fighter was killed in retaliatory fire by the Australian special forces sent to the area after intelligence reports pointed to the presence of al-Qaida and Taliban militants.

An Afghan governor said on Saturday said he believed the Australians came under fire from warring tribesman rather than Taliban or al-Qaida militants. *Reuters*

E. Timor set to become newest nation

DILI—A calm euphoria gripped East Timor Sunday as it prepared to become the world's newest nation at midnight, but the excitement was overshadowed by a confrontation with former ruler Indonesia about the presence of ships carrying troops.

Excited children in the capital Dili sold small replicas of East Timor's new black, red and gold flag that will no doubt be waved when the tiny territory of 750,000 people becomes the world's 192nd independent nation at the stroke of midnight (1500 GMT Sunday).

But two Indonesian navy ships moored in the Bay of Dili were a reminder of lingering tensions between the territory and Jakarta, which once claimed East Timor as its 27th province.

The ships were here ahead of the arrival of Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, who is braving opposition at home to attend the independence ceremony.

Dili protested to Jakarta Saturday over the entry of six Indonesian navy ships carrying armed troops.

Authorities said they had only agreed that one Indonesian landing ship could moor in the bay to deliver Megawati's bullet-proof car and land some presidential guards.

"We have conveyed our displeasure to the Indonesian side," Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta said. Four of the ships departed.

Indonesia's 24-year rule ended here with a bloody vote for independence in a United Nations-run ballot in August 1999.

Days after the landmark vote, Indonesian-army backed militiamen went on the rampage, killing hundreds of independence supporters and cutting a swathe of arson and destruction through the territory.

Over the quarter century of Indonesian rule and the protracted guerrilla war against it, an estimated 200,000 East Timorese died. *AFP*

Asean security ministers discuss terror

KUALA LUMPUR—Southeast Asian security ministers began arriving here Sunday for a special meeting to discuss the terror scare and to explore a regional pact to combat the scourge.

The home (interior) ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations at a two-day session starting Monday would seek to deepen cooperation among their law enforcement agencies and boost intelligence sharing, officials said.

But they would stop short of defining terrorism amid failure among senior officials at a preparatory meeting Saturday to agree on the matter, officials and reports said.

The proposal to define terrorism was made by host Malaysia, who wanted an Asean consensus to boost enforcement in the region.

Resistance

But the New Sunday Times said the Malaysian proposal met with resistance from Singapore and the Philippines, both of whom are close allies of the United States.

It quoted diplomats as saying that the two countries feared that an Asian definition would make it cumbersome for them to act against new forms of terrorism in the future.

Burma's Colonel Sit Aye, director of the international relations department, has described the definition as a "very controversial" issue, but said Burma would follow the consensus.

The Singapore home ministry's deputy secretary, Tan Boon Huat, said the Asean session was not a forum for intellectual debate but to "show the world that Asean is serious and we are looking at effective and practical means to deal with it."

"The question of definition is not really that important. We don't have to wait for a universally accepted definition to act against terrorists, we know who they are," Tan said.

"It is not an impediment."

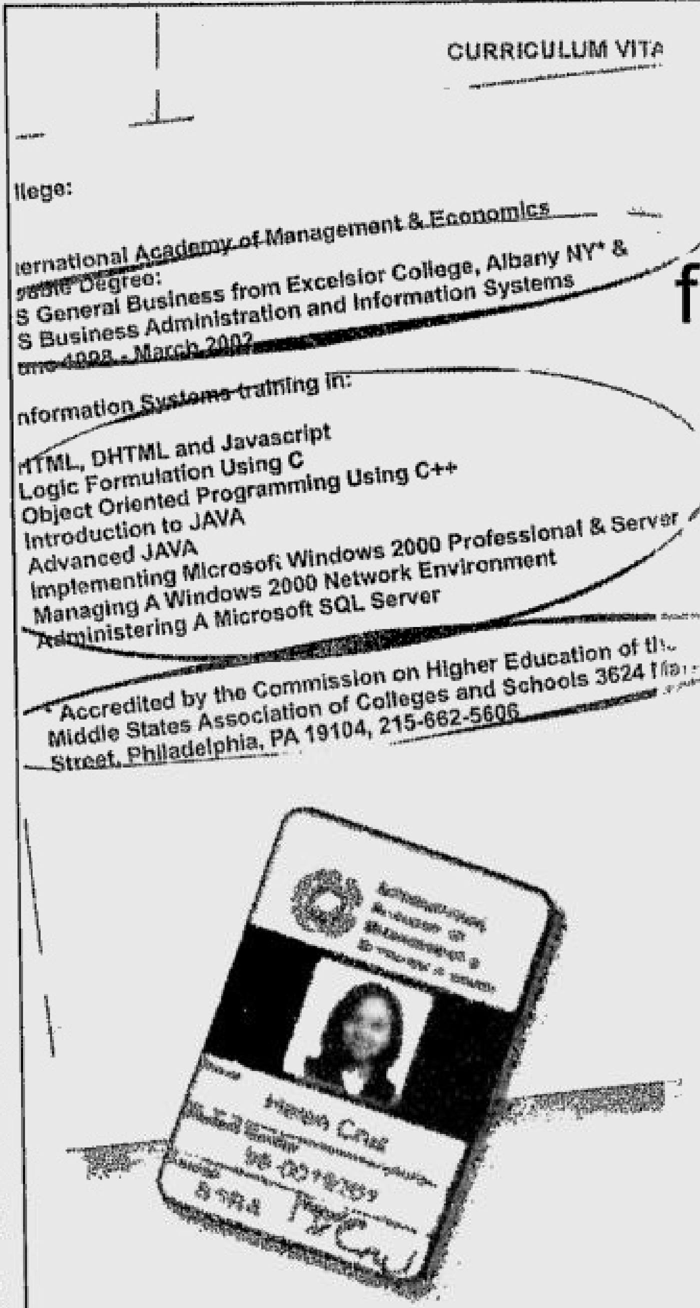
Soft target

Tan said all 10 Asean nations have heightened security following the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States, and the region was no longer a "soft target" for potential terrorists.

"But Asean must remain ever vigilant because terrorism is something that will go on for a long time," he added.

Tan said a joint communique to be issued by the ministers Tuesday would be a "statement of commitments" to fight terror with new projects aimed at capability building and best practices in the region.

"It will be an endorsement from Asean ministers that the impetus to fight terror is maintained," he said. **AFP**



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Colleagues seek justice for slain doc

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—Fellow practitioners of the slain cardiologist who had served at the St. Luke's Medical Center and in various hospitals in Laguna, Batangas and Quezon are demanding justice for his murder on Sunday.

Nelia Babehis, the victim's secretary for 10 years, said her boss, Dr. Franklin Aveleneda, 46, single, a native of Atimonan, Quezon, was killed by still unidentified men about 11:30 p.m., May 12, inside the Apec University of the Philippines campus in this town.

A UPLB police officer, identified only as San Juan, confirmed the killing but would not give details, saying the National Bureau of Investigation was handling the investigation.

PO1 Joselito Caparoso of the Los Baños police also said the NBI was pursuing the case and that one suspect had already been arrested. He did not identify the suspect.

A man claiming to be Aveleneda's fellow physician at the St. Luke's and who identified himself only as Docvince e-mailed the INQUIRER on May 16 with the message: "A colleague of ours, Dr. Franklin Aveleneda, was brutally killed last Sunday. He was one of our prominent cardiologist-consultants at the Heart Institute of St. Luke's Medical Center. He was head of training for future cardiologist(s) in our center."

"He was handcuffed, tortured, shot and stabbed several times in Laguna," the message read. ***Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

Bomb found outside coliseum packed with 5,000 MBA fans

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—A bomb was found outside the coliseum of the University of St. La Salle (USLS) on Saturday night where 5,000 basketball fans were gathered to watch a Metropolitan Basketball Association (MBA) game between the Negros Slashers and Davao Eagles.

Police were still determining who placed the bomb near the area where the LPG tanks were kept outside the USLS food court beside the gym.

Chief Insp. Rolin Balquin, city deputy police director, said there were no leads yet as to the identity of the suspects.

"Clearly it indicated that it has something to do with the games. The Slashers management may have some internal conflict," he said.

Balquin said a call was received at the USLS guardhouse about 6:45 p.m. from an unidentified man who said two bombs had been planted in the gym.

The caller claimed that one bomb was placed inside the gym while the other was outside, he said.

Balquin said the caller did not explain why the bomb was planted although the police suspected that it might be meant to sabotage the Slashers' game.

A bomb disposal team silently searched for the bomb. Police did not inform the crowd about the bomb threat to avoid a stampede.

The bomb was eventually found about 8:30 p.m. in an area where the LPG tanks are kept, said Denny Montoya, bomb disposal expert.

He described the bomb as a black cylindrical one with cable wires and plastic explosives held together by molding clay.

The bomb also had a maze of wires, with three Nicad batteries and a square watch timer, he said.

"We carefully loaded the bomb onto a trolley, which we pushed to a secure area at a parking lot behind the gym to ensure that it was away from the crowd," he said.

Although the caller said there were two bombs, Montoya said only one was found after a thorough search of the gym.

When the basketball game ended past 9 p.m., the people were directed to exit through the front doors and were not allowed to go to the back parking lot.

The bomb disposal team detonated the bomb at the parking lot about 10:30 p.m. It placed the bomb inside a rubber tire attached with blasting caps.

The small blast did not cause any damage to property.

Montoya said he had yet to analyze the bomb. He noted that the bomb was homemade and its parts could be bought from hardware stores.

If the bomb had exploded near the LPG tanks, it could have caused panic and injuries to a lot of people, he said.

RP gov't failure to solve journalists' slayings condemned

DAMALERIO

PAGADIAN CITY—The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) slammed the Philippine government for its failure to prosecute those responsible for the murder of journalists in the country.

Since 1986, at least 38 journalists have died in the country. According to the Philippine Press Institute, none of the killings have been solved.

"(The) CPJ condemns your govern-ment's failure to prosecute those responsible for the murders of the country's journalists," Ann K. Cooper, CPJ executive director, told President Macapagal-Arroyo in a letter dated May 15.

The CPJ is a nonpartisan organization of journalists dedicated to the defense of their colleagues worldwide.

Cooper also warned that the unsolved killings have continued to put the country in a bad light.

"Such impunity threatens the Philippines' international reputation as a democracy that respects press freedom," she said.

The latest CPJ condemnation came after another journalist was killed here last week.

Edgar Damalerio, managing editor of the Zamboanga Scribe, was gunned down after he emerged from a press briefing given by the Zamboanga Electric Cooperative on May 13.

Two motorcycle-riding men overtook Damalerio, who was driving his jeep in a dimly lit street, some 500 meters from the city police station.

One of the men drew a .45 cal. pistol and shot the journalist. The victim as the assassins sped off.

Damalerio was the fourth journalist to die in this city alone since last year.

The first to die from an assassin's bullet was William "Billy" Yu, publisher of the Pagadian City Star.

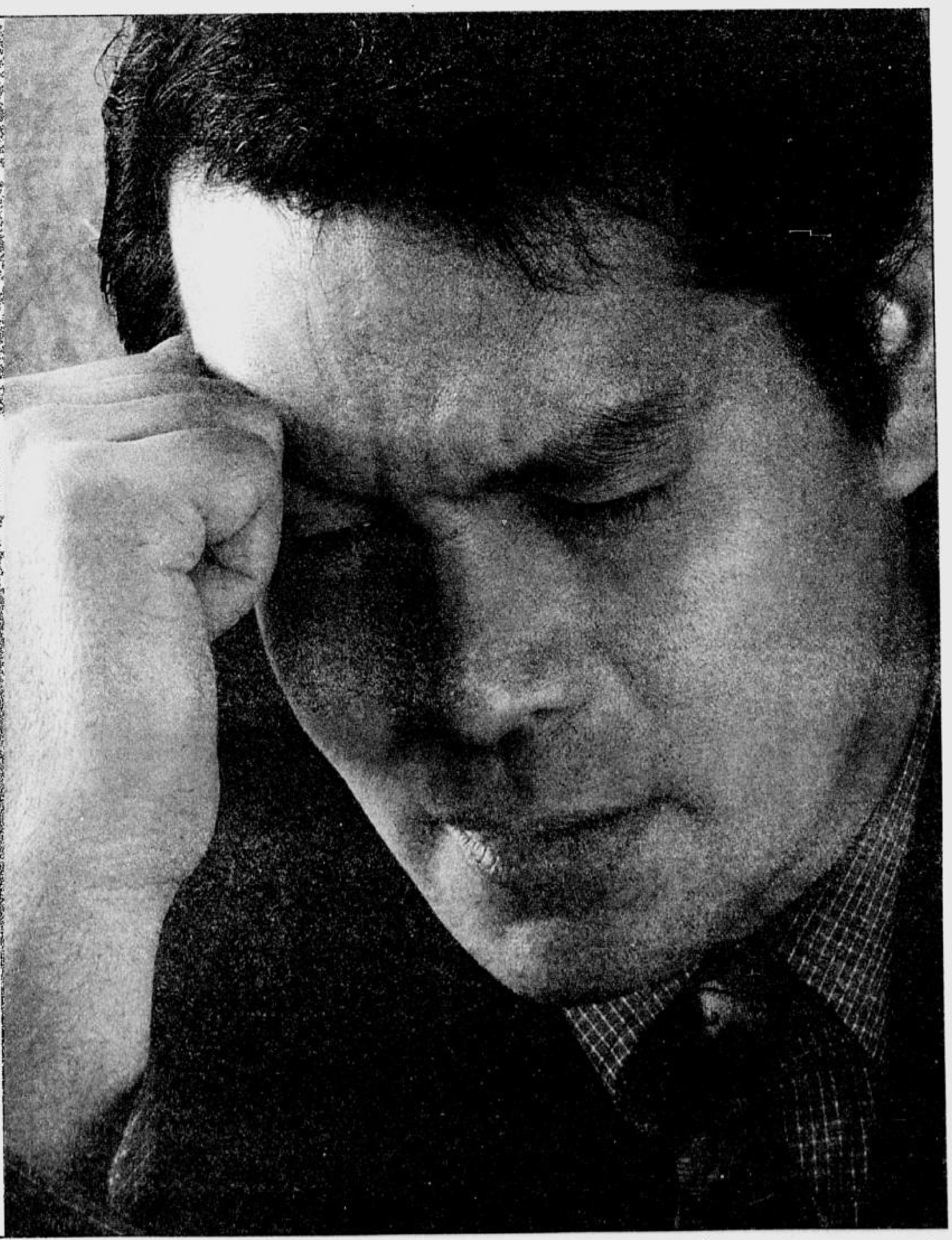
However, police said a dispute over a parcel of land could be behind the attack.

On Nov. 17, broadcast journalist Olimpio Jalapit Jr. of Radio Mindanao Networks' station dxPR was shot dead by motorcycle-riding gunmen.

Jalapit was on his way to attend a dialogue with former Rep. Aurora Cerilles, now governor of Zamboanga del Sur, in connection with the official's complaint filed before the RMN management.

Cerilles had accused Jalapit of over-criticizing her husband, former environment secretary Antonio Cerilles.

After Jalapit's death, unidentified men killed Ustadz Muhammad Yusop, a reporter and commentator of radio station dxID. ***Hernan P. dela Cruz, PDI Mindanao Bureau***



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INTEL WORK QUESTIONED

Probe of Capiz shootout sought

By Gerry T. Pagharion
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—The Capiz provincial board on Friday urged the two Capiz congressmen to initiate a congressional inquiry into the shootout in Dumalag town that led to the killing of three persons.

In a resolution, the provincial board called on Capiz Representatives Rodriguez Dadivas of the first district and Fredenil Castro of the second district to look into the way the National Bureau of Investigation in Western Visayas handled the entrapment operation that resulted in a bloody shootout.

The resolution was passed on Friday after the NBI said it would file kidnapping charges against Marivic Salazar and other persons involved in the alleged kidnapping of Madeline Erada.

Board member Victor Tanco Jr. lashed at the NBI for not checking first the background of the personalities involved in the alleged kidnapping case.

Had it done so, he said the NBI could have been properly guided on the motive of the people allegedly involved in the kidnapping and bloodshed could have been avoided.

Tanco noted that the NBI appeared to be "so hungry for accomplishment" without taking into account the consequence of its action.

Like many Capiceños here, the board members were not convinced that the Salazar couple were involved in kidnapping, according to the theory of the NBI.

Almost all the board members also expressed disbelief that the prominent couple—Dindo and Marivic Salazar—were capable of committing a crime as heinous as kidnapping.

The couple owned a furniture shop in Dumalag and a calling station. Marivic was into the money-lending and jewelry businesses. They also belong to prominent families in Capiz.

The two allegedly forced Erada to get into a plane to Iloilo after the three accidentally met at the Manila domestic airport in Manila on May 9.

They then allegedly told Perla Pasoquin, Erada's sister, to produce about P100,000 on or before 8 p.m. of May 10. That day, Pasoquin gave only P34,000 to Marivic when she went to the couple's house in Dumalag. The next payoff was set on May 15 but Pasoquin sought the help of the NBI.

The NBI staged an entrapment operation on May 15 in Dumalag. A shootout ensued killing Dindo, Pasoquin and Army Private First Class Janet Bacanto.

Mayor Ricardo Castro of Dumalag took Marivic under his custody while Erada was rescued unharmed. Erada could not be reached for comment as the NBI reportedly facilitated her immediate return to Manila after the shootout.

Erada used to be employed at the Roxas Memorial Provincial Hospital as a municipal health officer.

But her employment was terminated by Capiz provincial health officer Obdulia Gloria in 1995 when she went on absence without leave reportedly due to a string of estafa cases filed against her.

Top NPA leader, 2 others nabbed in Pagadian raid

PAGADIAN CITY—Elements of the National Bureau of Investigation and the military have arrested a ranking communist leader and two other rebels during a raid here on Thursday evening.

Elino Pangasian alias Iking, secretary of the New People's Army's Front TRAK (Tukuran, Ramon Magsaysay, Aurora and Karumatan) operating in Lanao del Norte and portions of Zamboanga del Sur, was arrested inside his house in Purok Roxas in Sto. Niño District here around 7 p.m.

Pangasian's arrest brought to three the number of ranking communist leaders in Zamboanga del Sur, who fell into the government's hands since last month.

On April 23, Col. Estrellito Romero, commander of the Army's 101st Infantry Brigade based in Piñan, Zamboanga del Norte, announced the surrender of Richard Angcot, who was said to be the chief of the regional communist party committee and Anecito Ayacayde, the deputy secretary and vice commander of the Special Section Committee Jojie that covers a portion of Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte and Misamis Occidental.

Friolo Icao, NBI district chief, identified those arrested with Pangasian as Eliong Sumalpong, the NPA leader's aide and a certain Daisy Catipay.

Icao said the raiding team seized a magnum .357 revolver, ammunition and communist documents inside Pangasian's house.

He said they were also able to recover a mobile phone but that they were still figuring out how to override its security settings.

Icao said the messages in the mobile phone, which could lead to more arrests and might help thwart any plans by the rebels, were encrypted in a manner that only an expert would be able to decode it. ***Hernan P. dela Cruz, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

'BANGUS' FEAST
Dagupan folk celebrate the first Bangus Festival in Pangasinan, a few days before another fish kill hit the city, destroying some P10 million worth of milkfish. EV ESPIRITU

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There's Life After Debt

The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 gave a big blow to the Philippine economy. Many were caught flat-footed and unarmed against the turmoil. Business statistics showed that thousands of companies have closed down and a lot more left in comatose status.

In the midst of this economic turbulence, a group of highly skilled professionals in the field of law, finance and the best negotiators, debt managers and specialist gave birth to **Crisis Solutions, Inc.**, a revolutionary, first of its kind company of this nature. Debt management and investor sourcing is **CSI's** core business. It's main objective is to act as a barrier and later on as a "bullet proof vest" to individuals and companies from harassment, threats and litigation imposed by creditors.

According to **Atty. Voltaire C. Dela Cruz, CSI Director for Legal,** the peso deterioration that resulted in the staggering increase in the price of materials, particularly imported ones have adversely affected the capitalists. Some were forced to slow down production, reduced manpower and increase the price of commodities. These compelling factors caused the consumers' purchasing power to enormously decrease. This domino effect led to economic slump which crippled many businessmen.

Due to this crisis, businessmen failed to settle their obligations with their creditors/financiers. Interest loans piled up until they could no longer sustain operation of their businesses. And to make things worst, they were chased, harassed and even sued by their creditors.

"We know the ordeal of companies and people who are indebted - heavily burdened, pressured, scared and feeling like it's their end", according to **Mr. Teddy Esguerra, Marketing Manager.**

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CSI acts as a bridge between the debtors and the creditors for a win-win situation. However, the task of **CSI** does not end there. They help their clients recover through partnerships with other clients to form alliances. They even source investors who could revive their businesses. They have tie-ups with different local and foreign companies to assist their clients with finances in their rehabilitation programs.

CSI caters to businesses, big or small, who need solutions to their debt problems; who want to live a normal life again.

It's main objective is to act as a barrier and later on as a "bullet proof vest" to individuals and companies from harassment, threats and litigation imposed by creditors.

we provide an emergency room for financially distressed clients for an intensive discussion, planning and immediate implementation of solutions to their problems

"Let's face it, our economy is not that strong yet and apparently there's a lot of people undergoing the same predicament", according to Mr. Esguerra. "As we can see, there are those who have closed their shops already, there are unfinished building constructions, and other indicators that the country has not recovered yet, and we would like to help", he added.

To date, **CSI** has a considerable number of clients whose businesses have already been rehabilitated. Some through loan restructuring, others by getting finances which could be **acquired within 48 hours** to support their operation and likewise merging or tie-ups with other investors. Whatever, now, they're back to business!

"If there's one thing that we could be proud of, is that **CSI** doesn't only help businessmen and individuals, but in our own way we are somehow contributing to the country's economic growth", boasted Atty. Dela Cruz.

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-rlmarasigan-

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms in the afternoon or evening

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	HI35° Lo 25°
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	HI 26° Lo 16°
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	HI 36° Lo 28°
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	HI 34° Lo 24°
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	HI 34° Lo 24°
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	HI 33° Lo 23°
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	HI 33° Lo 25°
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	HI 34° Lo 24°
Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy	HI 34° Lo 25°
Roxas	Partly Cloudy	HI 34° Lo 25°
Cebu	Partly Cloudy	HI 34° Lo 25°
Tacloban	Partly Cloudy	HI 36° Lo 25°
Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains	HI 32° Lo 25°
Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains	HI 33° Lo 25°
Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains	HI 32° Lo 24°
Davao	Cloudy with Rains	HI 32° Lo 25°

Compiled by: Ray Leyesa, PDI Research/05/20/02

Coal company urged to pay ₱113M in realty taxes

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The mayor of Caluya town in Antique has urged Asia's biggest coal corporation to pay real property taxes amounting to at least P113 million as ordered by the court.

Caluya Mayor Domingo Frangue Jr. said the Semirara Coal Corp. (SCC), now known as the Semirara Mining Corp., should abide by the order of Judge Nery Duremdes of the Antique Regional Trial Court Branch 13 on April 29.

"It's been a long time and they should pay (the taxes). If we allow this (non-payment of taxes), there will be no improvement," said Frangue in a telephone interview with the INQUIRER.

Frangue said the payment of the SCC's taxes would help the town implement its projects like the completion of the construction of their municipal hall.

The INQUIRER had tried to reach the SCC lawyers for comment but to no avail.

Duremdes ordered the execution of judgment of the decision of then presiding Judge Antonio Natino in 1999 as modified by a resolution handed down by Duremdes on Sept. 7, 2000. The decision orders the SCC to pay real property taxes from Jan. 1, 1992 to Dec. 31, 1996 amounting to P22,173,361.13 and an additional P150,000 in damages.

The decision also ordered the SCC to pay real property taxes from Jan. 1, 1997 "and the succeeding years thereafter..." based on the appraisal of the Caluya municipal treasurer.

The order was issued after the SCC failed to have the RTC decision reversed by the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court.

The SCC's liability has reached P113,540,539.07 as of 2000 based on the assessment of the municipal treasurer of Caluya.

The SCC had argued that it was exempted from paying all taxes except income tax based on Presidential Decree No. 972 known as the "Coal Development Act" and on contracts it entered into with the Energy Development Board.

But the Caluya municipal government claimed that whatever tax exemptions the SCC enjoyed in the past were "superseded, canceled and/or set aside" by the enactment of Republic Act 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991 that gave taxation power to local government units.

Frangue said the non-payment of taxes of the SCC brought losses to his town, a fourth class municipality earning around P24 million annually with a population of more than 20,000.

He said that SCC president Victor Consunji assured him the coal corporation was willing to pay their liabilities when they talked last December.

"But until now, they have not given any amount," he said.

The SCC is a 74 percent subsidiary of the D.M. Consunji Inc. For more than 20 years, it has been operating the biggest coal mine in Asia on the 5,500-hectare Semirara Island, one of the nine islands that make up Caluya town.

ROUNDUP

Measles kills 4 kids

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—Four children died while 84 others fell ill after they were afflicted with the measles virus in Barangay San Vicente in Urdaneta City from January to April this year. Records of the provincial health office identified the victims as Mary Jane Dacasin, 1; Jessie Malig III, 9; Ricardo Ramos Jr., 11; and Princess Garcia, 3. The four died last March. Alfredo Sy, assistant provincial health officer, said the village was hard hit by the outbreak because of the low rate of vaccination there.

Yolanda Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Water from lake

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Efforts to tap the water of Lake Looc in Castillejos, Zambales, for the province's rice lands and fish pens gained a big boost last week after the provincial board and the Castillejos municipal board endorsed the $3.5-million Lake Looc development project to the Regional Development Council. The endorsement came three years after Castillejos officials proposed the project, which seeks to retain the lake's water to serve the agriculture industry in Zambales.

Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

4 robbery suspects held

PALO, Leyte—Police arrested four persons tagged as suspects in a series of robberies in Samar. The four were Oscar Bacolod, 34; Dionesio Castillo, 21; Harvie Lovino, 29; and Al Atencio, 30, all of Northern Samar. Police reports showed that Lovino was supposedly a detainee at the sub-provincial jail in Allen town. "We are now conducting an investigation how he got out of the jail when he is a detainee there (in Allen)," said Chief Supt. Nardito Yoro, police director for Eastern Visayas. Lovino was arrested in Barangay Balite, San Isidro town, Northern Samar. Yoro said the three others were arrested in their houses in Northern Samar.

Cynthia A. Borgueta, PDI Visayas Bureau

Man cuts off organ

BACOLOD CITY—A distraught young man cut off his sex organ with a rusty scythe last week and then threw it into burning coal in his kitchen in Barangay Tabuc Suba, Cauayan town, 119 kilometers southwest of here. Jovan Magbanua, 21, was brought to a hospital here on May 13 but the doctors could no longer re-attach his burned sex organ. In an interview with a radio station, Jovan said that while he had accepted that he no longer had a penis, he regretted that he cut it off.

Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

Ceboom again

CEBU'S construction industry is enjoying bright prospects this year. These include the Cebu provincial government's P200 million mega-dome project and the Ayala Land Inc.'s (ALI) mid-income housing project. Real estate property developer ALI has recently shifted its focus on middle income housing projects through the creation of its subsidiary, the Community Innovations Inc. (CII). The move was in response to the slack in high-end residential and office property ventures. With an initial capital of P500 million for housing ventures, CII is expected to spend between P250 million to P700 million for other new projects which will include residential subdivisions, townhouse clusters, and condominiums priced between P3.7 million to P6.6 million.

MT. NILODE DISASTER

Mayor linked to overloading of boat

CEBU CITY—A Coast Guard officer based in Naval, Biliran, has testified that Maripipi Mayor Uldarico Macoron convinced the operator of the ill-fated MT Nilode to cancel the boat's morning trip and wait for government employees who were going home later in the day.

Petty Officer 2 Jose Alamo told the Special Board of Marine Inquiry (SBMI) on Friday that the motorboat was cleared to leave to Maripipi Island at 10 a.m. of May 11 after complying with the Masters' Oath for Safety Departure (MOSD), roll book and other needed documents.

But after lunch, Alamo noticed many people were flocking to the pier. He immediately informed detachment commander Romulo Mesias, who asked him to check the pier.

"I was surprised to see MT Nilode still docked at the port and this time overloaded with passengers," Alamo said in Cebuano.

"When I made the headcount there were more than 70 passengers," he said.

When he asked vessel owner Alfredo Malanan why he did not leave at the scheduled departure time, Malanan told him that Macoron asked him to delay the trip to wait for government employees who were attending the 10th Biliran founding anniversary, Alamo narrated.

The motorboat sailed at 4:30 p.m. with more than 100 passengers when its passenger capacity was only 30. Some 20 minutes later, the boat capsized, killing 19 persons.

Lt. Commander Eduardo Legaspi, SBMI chair, said the board would study the alleged participation of Mayor Macoron in the accident.

Macoron earlier denied allegations that he had ordered Malanan not to sail and wait for more passengers, mostly barangay officials.

Alamo said he tried to issue an Inspection and Apprehension Report (IAR) to Malanan at the pier, but strong winds blew the IAR documents into the water.

"So I called him to accompany me to the station so he can sign the IAR," he said.

At the detachment, Alamo said he warned Malanan several times not to depart for Maripipi until he had reduced the number of passengers to 30.

Initially, he said Malanan asked for clearance to leave but was later irked and did not accept a copy of the IAR when the Coast Guard did not let him sail.

After signing the document, Malanan went back to the pier. Afraid that the sea craft would depart, Alamo said he went after Malana and again warned him not to leave.

But this time, Alamo said, he was faced by passengers who introduced themselves as local government officials and barangay officials.

"They pressured me to let them depart. Some of the passengers insulted me. They said I am only a Coast Guard officer and they can throw me to the sea. I also noticed that some of them were drunk," he said.

Afraid, Alamo went back to the detachment to inform Mesias about the situation.

"When we returned 20 minutes later, the motor banca was already 500 meters away from the pier," he said.

He added that they were even looking for motor bancas to go after MT Nilode when it capsized about one nautical mile from the Naval pier.

Alamo, however, failed to name the government officials who allegedly threatened him.

Lawyer Pepito Suello, SBMI legal member, wondered why Alamo left the pier at that critical time.

Lt. Commander Legaspi asked Mesias if he was aware of a Coast Guard memorandum dated May 5, 2000 that the boarding inspection team should not leave the sea craft to prevent last-minute boarding. ***Fritzie Joy J. Dungog, PDI Visayas Bureau***

VAL HANDUMON

AT HOME AT SEA
Children of the Badjao tribe, who live on houses on stilts in Taluksangay, Zamboanga City, walk on narrow planks to move around their community.

Conference drums up sustained opposition to commercial mining

By Maurice Malanes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The traumatic aftermath of a mine tailings spill from Marcopper Mining Corp.-Placer Dome, which killed Marinduque's 27-km Boac River in 1996, remains a recurring nightmare not only for Marinduqueños but also for other communities nationwide.

The giant crater-like scar left by the open pit operations of Benguet Corp. in Itogon, Benguet has also become an apt educational visual aid for visiting indigenous B'laan, Subanen and other Mindanao *lumad* folk.

These indigenous peoples have been enticed by giant mining companies to let their ancestral domains become minefields.

The Boac mine tailings spill, considered the "mother of mining disasters" in recent years, and the troubles and conflicts that big mining firms brought to Benguet folk were among the issues and concerns discussed during a national mining conference held here on May 6 to 10.

From Benguet, Cagayan Valley, Marinduque, Negros, Capiz and Panay to the B'laan and Subanen lands in Mindanao, community leaders and local officials have all agreed to protect and maintain their "food bowls" rather than give in to enticing offers from big Filipino and transnational mining firms.

A MONUMENT to mining at the main gate of Benguet Mining Corp. serves as a rough reminder of mining's heydays and the controversies it continues to spawn. TOOTS SOBERANO

Citing the devastating impact of the Marcopper disaster, the delegates said one of the biggest threats to the country's food security and food self-sufficiency is big-scale corporate mining.

Marcopper's mining operations, for example, did not only kill the Boac River, the cradle of agriculture in Marinduque, an island-province in Southern Tagalog.

The mining firm's operations also killed the Calancan Bay, where 24,000 tons of mine tailings had been poured daily since 1975, said Elizabeth Manggol, who coordinates the non-government Marinduque Council for Environmental Concerns.

The Calancan Bay, she said, is a vital protein source for residents of Sta. Cruz and other neighboring villages.

The more than 2,000 fishermen, who solely depend on the bay for their livelihood, have yet to be compensated, she told the mining conference organized by several non-government organizations led by the Tebtebba Foundation, Cordillera Peoples Alliance, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center.

Manggol said her organization also coordinated a medical research with Dr. Nelia Maramba, toxicologist of the Department of Health, who found that at least 75 children from three villages around the Calancan Bay have toxic chemicals in their bodies.

Of the 75, at least 21 underwent treatment to eliminate toxins from their bodies.

Because of Maramba's findings, then President Fidel Ramos placed the three villages around the Calancan Bay under a state of calamity.

But Manggol lamented that the government until now has yet to compel Marcopper-Placer Dome to compensate the damage of its mining operations to agriculture and environment and to the local residents' health.

Placer Dome had reportedly said the case of the 75 children was common in a poor country such as the Philippines.

It said the case was also common in a "highly mineralized province," where 80 percent of its land is rich in minerals.

Even before Marcopper-Placer Dome could clean up its environmental mess and compensate for the damage it wrought on the Boac and Calancan, the company's mine tailings dam along the Mogpog River collapsed during a typhoon last year.

The tailings from the destroyed dam killed all the fish in the river, prompting the Department of Environment and Natural Resource to declare the water body "critical."

But the DENR and the company, according to Manggol, have yet to do something to compensate the affected residents and to bring the river back to its original pristine form.

Raquim Dabi, 33, a B'laan tribal chieftain from Columbio, Sultan Kudarat, has learned something from the open-pit minefields in Itogon, aside from having heard about the mine spill disaster in Marinduque.

An "exposure trip" that he and other B'laan and Subanen leaders made to an open pit mine field in Antamok village in Itogon a few years ago convinced him that he would not allow his community to become another open pit mine field.

"I would rather continue to hunt eels and lobsters in our rivers and wild game in our forests rather than allow my community to become another open-pit minefield where not even grass grows," he said.

Because he had never seen a minefield until his visit to Itogon, he and other B'laans were at first enamored by what the Australian Western Mining Corp. offered them in 1995—schools, roads and jobs.

But in exchange, the company sought to mine the B'laan territory through a Financial Technical Assistance Agreement issued by the DENR.

But after learning the motives of the company and after learning from the experience of Itogon, Dabi said he and his people resisted the company's bid to mine gold in the B'laan's ancestral domain.

Gov suspends 12 health workers for joining rally

ILAGAN, Isabela—A government doctor and 11 health workers in Isabela were suspended for 60 days for their participation in last month's rally protesting the planned closure or merger of nine government hospitals here.

Dr. Antonio Catembung Jr., president of the Alliance of Health Workers in Isabela, and 11 health employees at the San Antonio Municipal Hospital here and the San Mariano Medicare and Community Hospital in San Mariano town were suspended without pay for alleged gross misconduct and absence without official leave.

Gov. Faustino Dy Jr. issued the suspension order following the filing of an administrative complaint before lawyer Dionisio Bala at the provincial legal office, days after the rally.

Lawyer Antonio Paguirigan, provincial administrator, assured Catembung and the 11 workers of due process in the hearing of the administrative complaint.

He said the suspension order was not meant to punish them but to guarantee a fair hearing of their case.

Paguirigan allayed fears that the suspension of the workers would disrupt services in the two hospitals.

Last month, about 300 health workers and members of cause-oriented groups protested the provincial government's program to close or merge at least nine community hospitals in the province.

Catembung said the health workers feared that the closure or merger of the hospitals would disrupt health services and displace hundreds of health workers. ***Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

ILOILO'S WOE

Traders find ₱7-B flood project too costly

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The proposed P7-billion flood control project may be the answer to the perennial flooding in this city but members of a business group have balked at its staggering cost and possible adverse effects on the environment.

During a meeting with officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways on May 15, members of the Iloilo Business Club (IBC) said the government should explore less costly solutions to the flooding problem.

This, despite the fact that the flood control project will start next year and has already been granted an environmental compliance certificate (ECC).

"Some members of the IBC find the project too expensive. We need more information on the project so that our members can form their opinion about it," said Marissa Segovia, IBC president.

Several IBC members were hearing out the suggestion of Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez of Iloilo City to scrap the project and instead dredge the rivers, creeks and tributaries in the city.

Members of sand and gravel quarry associations had earlier volunteered to help in the dredging at no cost to the government.

Gonzalez called for a review and possible redesign of the project to lower its cost.

Nonito Fano, project director of the DPWH's Project Management Office, said the project would help reduce flooding in the city by 80 percent upon the completion of its first phase.

He assured the IBC members that the environmental safeguards have been in place. It was given an ECC in 1998 after the completion of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS).

"The DPWH is confident that the project is a solution to the flooding problem in Iloilo City. It (project) went through a five-year comprehensive study and needed the support of enlightened groups like the business club," said Fano.

The project is the biggest flood control project ever in Western Visayas. The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBLC) approved the P2.6-billion loan for the project to be paid for by the national government.

The loan is payable after 10 years with a 1.5-percent interest for 20 years. Construction starts next year and is scheduled to end in 2007.

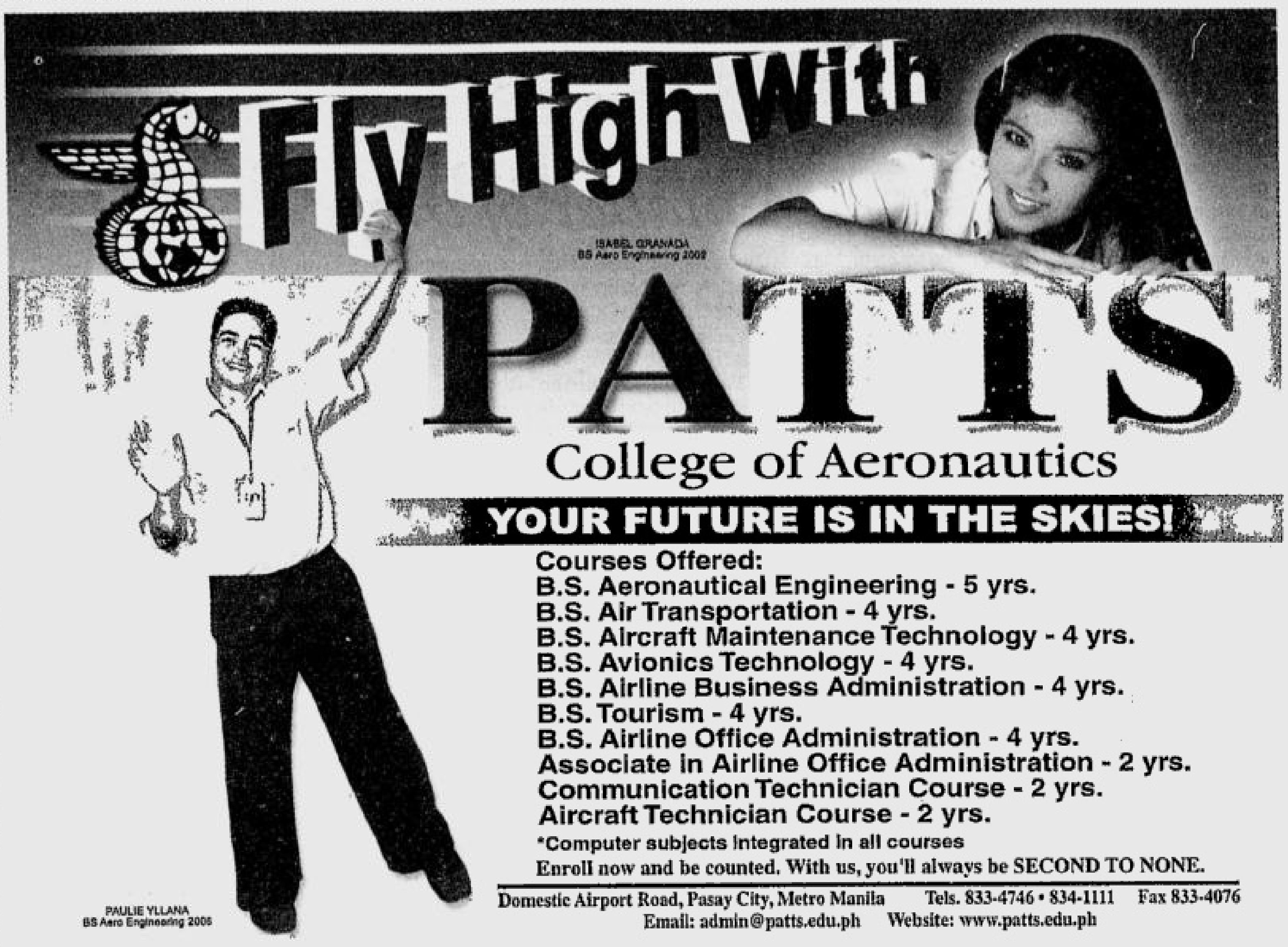
The project is designed to deal with floods similar to that caused by Typhoon "Oyang" in July 1994 that affected some 90,000 people and placed 85 percent of the city under water.

The average depth of flood in the city is at least one meter and flooding could occur during the typhoon season and heavy monsoon rains. The city was swept by 13 floods from November 1990 to December 2000.

The existing channels of the Jaro and Iloilo Rivers could no longer contain the flow of the Aganan and Tigum Rivers when flood waters rampage at 600 cubic meters per second. The flow is above the 440 cubic meters per second capacity of the Jaro and Iloilo Rivers.

Stage 1 of the flood control project entails the construction of a 5-kilometer Jaro Floodway, improvement of Jaro, Tigum River and the Ingore Creek, and the construction of six bridges. These structures will deal with big floods that occur once in 20 years.

Stage 2 will dwell on improving the middle portion of the Jaro River, the construction of the La Paz Floodway and the improvement of the Ingore and Barrio Obrero creeks. These are expected to protect the city from big floods that occur every 50 years.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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

Lacson wants pork barrel scrapped

From page A1

laws," he said.

A senator is allocated P200 million in pork, according to administration Sen. Francis Pangilinan. A representative of a district is entitled to P65 million in the PDAF and a sectoral representative, P35 million, according to Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr.

The PDAF is separate from a legislator's share of the infrastructure budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways. The DPWH's infrastructure budget for next year is P34.8 billion.

Asked for comment on Lacson's proposal, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he was not against the abolition of pork but he wanted Lacson's proposal amended.

Pimentel said the pork barrel of all members of Congress could be pooled and used to finance a national project like a railway network that will connect Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

Danger

He said just scrapping the pork barrel would favor the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is running in 2004.

"The danger here is that the administration will have at its disposal the whole amount. The money will be used for partisan ends," Pimentel said.

Lacson's proposal came after members of the House fought bitterly over the sharing of the DPWH's P34.8-billion infrastructure fund.

Many representatives wanted equal sharing of the infrastructure fund, which they claim, goes mostly to developed areas.

The squabble ended after House members approved a "brotherhood system" in which a congressional district receiving more than P38 million worth of public works projects will contribute from one to 3 percent of the amount to the "poorer districts."

Lacson announced his new anti-pork crusade as an afterthought after newly elected BPC president Wilfredo Cacdac asked for P2 million of Lacson's PDAF to jumpstart the construction of a media clubhouse here.

Lacson told club members and guests that he was preparing a privileged speech on the abolition of pork barrel in both houses of Congress.

"(The pork barrel) has been the source of corruption among lawmakers, among all other agencies in government. But don't worry. It will take some time if ever it gets the approval of my colleagues, and I have a little share left (for your clubhouse)," Lacson said.

Lacson noted that he followed a "no-take" policy when he was the PNP chief.

Contractors

"When I became senator, many contractors approached me and the first question they asked me was: '*Ano ba ang* requirements *ninyo* (What are your required share from the contract amount)?" Lacson later told the INQUIRER.

"It's saddening because for every P1 million (of the PDAF) released for a farm-to-market road, only a high of 40 percent actually goes to the construction. The 60 percent is lost to corruption," he said.

A former congressman said governors and mayors also get kickbacks from infrastructure projects of legislators. The kickbacks result in shoddy roads, bridges and school buildings.

Lacson said he had written letters to PDAF beneficiaries to alert them about his "no take" policy.

"Every time mayors or governors or congressmen approach me for a slice of my (PDAF), I always find time to tell them that they should guard against people, who claim to be my staff but ask for commission from the release of the PDAF," Lacson said.

Ironically, the senator has no idea how much of his PDAF this year has been released. He said he was certain though that his PDAF had not yet been consumed.

A matter of timing?

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Rufino said President Macapagal-Arroyo was not talking about her plans to seek a full term in 2004 because the timing wasn't right. "It's all a matter of timing," he said.

But in the next breath he talked about "very informal" talks being held with prospective running mates—a clear case of the veterinarian wanting to get the suffocating cat out of the proverbial bag.

"It's still all on the level of very informal talks," said Rufino, also the national executive director of the ruling Lakas-NUCD party.

One such prospective running mate whose name has been talked about, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., denied reports he was eyeing the position of Vice President. He issued the statement in Dagupan City on Saturday.

"I don't want to be President or become prime minister. How much more becoming Vice President?" he said in Filipino. Ms Macapagal was De Venecia's running mate when he ran for President in 1998.

De Venecia instead mentioned incumbent Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr., Senators Loren Legarda, Renato Cayetano, Franklin Drilon, Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Robert Barbers, and Education Secretary Raul Roco as the President's possible running mates in 2004.

The main opposition party still has to decide on its candidates.

Assistant House Minority Leader Gilbert Remulla said yesterday that the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP), in informal talks, was eyeing either Senators Edgardo Angara or Panfilo Lacson to be the party's standard bearer in 2004.

"It's a toss-up between Senators Angara and Lacson," Remulla said in a phone interview.

Political plans

The President has kept mum on her political plans. Acting Press Secretary Silvestre Afable said over the weekend that the "President is not playing coy about her plans. These things are not on her mind."

Afable said Ms Macapagal's priority was "development" and that "the President will continue to do this until such time she decides to announce her intentions for 2004."

He also declined to comment on who the opposition's strongest candidate was.

The Palace does not want to be involved in such "theoretical" and "partisan discussions," he said.

But with or without an open declaration, the President's allies have already publicly committed their support for her in 2004.

The revitalized Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino, or Kampi, under the new leadership of her personal publicist Dante Ang, has even come up with a slogan: "All the way with GMA." (It is derivative of the winning campaign slogan of US President Lyndon Johnson, who sought a full term in 1964 in his own name after succeeding to the office when John F. Kennedy was assassinated.)

Ms Macapagal has also assumed the chairmanship of the Lakas-NUCD.

De Venecia said he yielded the party leadership "as a strategy to strengthen and unite the party and prevent speculations that she will form her own party to (support) her in 2004."

"We have to prepare the ground for 2004 and (define) the role of Lakas in the 21st century," he said.

"President Macapagal-Arroyo's assumption of the leadership is like a powerful magnet that draws politicians to the party," De Venecia added.

He said many politicians had signified their intention to join Lakas precisely because of the perks enjoyed by candidates of a ruling party.

"But we won't just accept applicants," he said. "They have to be achievement-oriented and performance-oriented."

'Fiscalizing'

Remulla said that while his partymates had been holding several meetings, the 2004 election did not figure as a major topic. Instead, much of the discussion centered on the party's role in "fiscalizing," he said.

Much can still happen between now and 2004, the former television reporter and scion of the Remulla clan in Cavite added, hinting for one of the possibility of a majority senator joining the opposition camp soon.

"We're not that hot like Kampi and Lakas," Remulla said, in reference to preparing for 2004.

In Davao City, Rep. Prospero Nograles said the President was a "sure winner" in 2004 because of her "sound economic management." ***With a report from Yolanda Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

SK list-up starts amid disillusionment

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flict among aspiring barangay officials might arise once the elections become imminent.

Sadain, who consulted with regional, provincial and election officers, said "it is all systems go."

In Southern Mindanao, Comelec Director Lirio Joquiño said an estimated 406,000 youths were expected to sign up for the special registration.

Comelec Commissioner Resurreccion Borra said the massive campaign was meant to reach the 3 million youths eligible to vote for the SK but had failed to enlist from July to December last year.

The Comelec has been blamed for the disenfranchisement of around 4.5 million youth voters who were not able to register in time for the May 2001 national elections because of the lack of an effective information campaign.

With P160 million set aside for the two-day registration, 5 to 6 million Filipino youths are expected to sign up. The Comelec has a P1.3-billion budget for the July 15 polls.

The Comelec will post the approved list of registered voters for the SK on May 23 in the barangay halls and schools where the registration was conducted.

Special petition

Betito had filed a petition before the Supreme Court to compel the Comelec to hold a special registration before the May polls last year, but her plea was turned down despite the support of former Comelec officials in the Supreme Court.

Betito said the government should instead invest in community-based organizations like youth leadership in churches and schools to ensure that the funds for youth leaders are not wasted on SK officials who become puppets of traditional politicians.

Even Borra admitted that the SK had become more of an extension of traditional politicians, who use the SK to advance their own interests, he added. He said past experience would show that those who win in the youth polls are also relatives of incumbent barangay and city government officials.

"I have to admit the law is hypocritical," Borra said. "In reality, the SK polls are not 'non-partisan' as mandated in the Omnibus Election Code and the Local Government Code."

"In reality, it involves more bias because of close association and kinship among the young candidates and the incumbent barangay officials," Borra said.

Voters will elect eight officials each for the barangay and SK council. Whoever garners the highest number of votes will sit as chair of the council for a term of three years.

Prospective candidates can file their candidacy from June 27 to July 4. Candidates will be given only five days—from July 5 to 13—to campaign.

"I know that it's not yet hopeless for us. What we truly need are good youth leaders who can relate to their constituents," Betito said. ***With a report from Ayan C. Mellejor, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Critics out to discredit 'old man,' says lawyer

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And then he adds a fourth: "The American claims were forgotten."

It is through the prism of this discovery, he suggests, that the true measure of what he has done for the country's veterans can best be viewed. He also says that, early on in his term, he made a crucial counter-discovery.

"We realized that to be listened to, you needed a strong organization," he says. "So I (had) to travel from Aparri to Sulu, seven times, looking for my comrades, to organize them into posts in each town."

Created by law in 1960, the VFP today recognizes over 320,000 veterans, "living or dead." The number and the quote come from De Ocampo's daughter, Esperanza, who is an assistant secretary general at the federation.

Driving force

De Ocampo says he will never forget one encounter with a veteran's widow. At that time, the pension was P50 a month. The widow, the wife of a soldier "who was killed in action beside me," complained about the meagerness of the allowance. "If I were only younger," he recalls the widow as saying, "I can increase this, because I can go to Roxas Boulevard."

"Boy, that killed me," he says now. "Imagine, the widow of my soldier (was willing to) become a hostess"—that is, to be prostituted—if only to make ends meet.

It is through encounters like these, he suggests, that he is motivated to continue working for his fellow veterans. He says those who claim that he has done nothing for the veterans during his term do not know what they are talking about.

In the last 16 years, he points out, veterans' benefits have seen a dramatic rise.

"The benefits the veterans were receiving in 1986 were the same amounts that they were getting in 1969," says retired Gen. Ernesto Gidaya, president of the Association of Generals and Flag Officers and administrator of the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office in the late 1980s.

Republic Act No. 6948 raised the old-age pension to P500. During the term of President Fidel Ramos, a veteran himself, RA 7696 raised the pension to P1,000, with a P500 increment every year until the P5,000 mark is reached.

Deposed President Joseph Estrada "nailed" the pension to the P4,000 level, De Ocampo says in Filipino, but adds: "In July, GMA (President Macapagal-Arroyo) will make it P5,000."

Medical care for veterans has also improved since 1986, he says. "There was an increase in the budget from the moment I came in."

He reels off a list of improvements from memory: two laser eye-correction machines, renovated hospital wards, outpatient clinics, a blood bank, the inspiring involvement of volunteer doctors.

"*Marami kaming nagawa diyan* (We've done a lot in that area)," he sums up.

As for the US war claims, "we have started reviving that," he says. He is hopeful that, through Ms Macapagal's close working relationship with US President George W. Bush, a breakthrough will be reached.

Demolition job?

De Ocampo takes exception to the allegations of mismanagement and graft and corruption, saying he is worried that what he calls a demolition job may destroy the organization he has painstakingly rebuilt or, worse, derail the passage of the Equity bill in the US Congress.

The legislation would finally declare Filipino soldiers during World War II as US military veterans.

He talks of the injustice that has been done to Filipino soldiers by non-Filipino historians. To them, he says, a Filipino soldier is nothing more than "a hewer of wood and carrier of water."

But "we want Philippine (military) history to be straightened out," to be written from the point of view of Filipino soldiers.

The VFP is working with Filipino historians, he says, and adds that since 1986, "more than 150 (memorial) markers (have been placed) all over the country."

Aside from his wartime experience, he looks at his involvement in the VFP from history's perspective.

He remembers running for the VFP's Supreme Council in 1979, at the height of martial law, against the wishes of then President Ferdinand Marcos, against the slate of no less than the chief of staff of the Armed Forces, Gen. Romeo Espino.

He says he kept getting advice from veterans, all in the same vein. "*Ikaw lang ang puwedeng lumaban kay Marcos* (You are the only one who has any chance of running against Marcos)," he says he was told.

He finally decided to run, he says, "because nobody would stand up to Marcos."

The result: Even though the government controlled about half of the votes, he won by a landslide, polling twice as many votes as the one who came in second.

It is in the same historical spirit that he answers the allegations against him.

Asked about Beloso's contention that the VFP is made up of "ghost members," De Ocampo replies by recalling the time Beloso came to him to ask permission to set up a district. "I don't interfere in posts," he says. And then again: "I have not named anyone to any post."

He says that if Beloso failed to recognize his members, it was Beloso's fault. "You have to produce" your own members if you want to be a post or district commander, he says.

The involvement of Recio is easily explained, he also suggests. Because Recio's term as head of the VFP's Management Development Committee responsible for running the Veterans Industrial Area in Taguig was not extended, he says, Recio has an axe to grind.

"He has a really malicious intent," he says.

De Ocampo, Roxas, Gidaya and even De Ocampo's daughter Esperanza are one in saying that De Ocampo's accusers all have "an axe to grind." It is a theme on which, through a total of five hours of interview, they play several variations. "The burden of leadership is terrific," Roxas describes the man who "is like a father to me." The task facing De Ocampo every day, he says, is nothing less than "herculean."

If the description is apt, then the 79-year-old De Ocampo still has three years to finish what he says he started: cleaning the Augean stables of the country's veterans movement.

Case . . .

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We have to be warned, however, that in the remote possibility that the complaint is sent to the courts for judicial determination of the issues it has raised, the implication is that it will throw wide open the question of Ms Macapagal's accession to the presidency.

What if, for instance, it is determined that the military defection was a mutiny or a coup? All the acts then that followed it—including the swearing in of Ms Macapagal by Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. and the series of high court decisions upholding the transfer of power to her on Jan. 20—could be deemed illegal. The legitimacy structure built from that date could crumble like a house of cards.

The political reality at the background against the complaint is that had the coup failed, the coup makers would have been haled to court and executed for treason.

The alleged coup makers, however, happened to have been one of the winners in that conflict. Had their plot failed and had Estrada stayed in power, then Reyes et al. would be now in jail.

Still, we can't however ignore the determination of whether the generals had staged a "coup"—soft or otherwise.

Reyes' explanation

It is instructive to go back to Reyes' explanation of his decision to defect. According to him, he agonized over the decision. This, he explained at length in his interview with us for my book, "The Fall of Estrada," in his series of articles with the INQUIRER in March 2001, in interviews with Time magazine, and in his briefing to the Asian Institute of Management on Jan. 30, 2001.

Substantial portions of his interview with us have been published as annex in the book.

The complaint was based in part on the chapters in the book narrating the events leading to the military withdrawal. I have kept all these documents in my files.

What's striking about these documents is that they accent a single theme—a consistent effort by Reyes and the generals during their deliberations to keep their defection within the bounds of the constitutional provision that "the Armed Forces is the protector of the people and the state."

This provision was written into the 1987 Constitution in recognition of the AFP's pivotal role in the overthrow of Marcos in 1986.

A review of interviews with Reyes is therefore illuminating in determining whether the AFP did stage a power grab or a mutiny.

Even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that the generals staged a "coup," it still raises a question over why they did not grab power for themselves instead of transferring their allegiance to the Vice President.

For the empirical evidence is that on the day of the switch, Jan. 21, 2001, Reyes had by then consolidated the Armed Forces behind his decision. Had he been an overly ambitious general, forming a junta was indeed a tempting option.

And what if the AFP had another general for chief of staff? The outcome would have been different.

It is instructive to recall what Reyes wrote in his series of articles with the INQUIRER in February 2001.

Strategic mindset

Reyes described what he called his "strategic mindset" at that time.

"Military intervention in political affairs must only be considered a last recourse and in a manner that would be consistent with constitutional principles," he said.

"The AFP must watch the dynamics of a tense political situation very closely, taking great care not to let it go out of hand and imperil the security of the nation and the well-being of the people.

"But any such situation tends to develop a life of its own, and when it reaches a point of irreversibility, the chief of staff must carefully weigh extreme constitutional options at the disposal of the AFP to maintain social order.

"Hence, any decision by the military as an institution to intervene in political matters for what it deems to be constitutional reasons must be made only on the eleventh hour, as dictated by events outside its direct control.

"Viewed from the top of the military organization, the AFP chief of staff should not go against the government and duly constituted authorities unless it becomes clear that the government has lost control over the situation.

"It is therefore with a clear conscience that I can state that I did not plot against the Estrada government. That would have been an act of treachery. My decision was not directed against the government. It was to protect the government against forces ready to take advantage of the situation for their own ends."

In the face of the deepening crisis, Reyes told Time magazine that his chief preoccupation was "to avert bloodshed and keep the Armed Forces united."

He did not want the Armed Forces to be divided as in the 1986 mutiny, in which the opposing forces confronted each other for a showdown.

This is why, according to him, on Jan. 21, he directed his efforts in getting a consensus from the generals and in aligning the military hierarchy behind the decision to withdraw support for Estrada.

The long, gray-haired line moves, but ever so slowly

By Volt Contreras

THEY wait in line for hours.

Hard of hearing, or almost blind, or wheelchair-bound, they come every day to the Out-Patient Department of the Veterans Memorial Medical Center for the free medicine and medical assistance their wartime service or that of their spouse entitles them to.

One of them, a 72-year-old World War II veteran who served in the military police, complained about the lack of doctors and nurses at the OPD clinics. That is why he and his wife had been sitting there for the last four hours, the old man said, adding: "Please don't mention my name or I might end up blacklisted."

He is one of an estimated 800 out-patients served daily by the VMMC. The hospital, like most cash-strapped, state-run agencies, conducts business with a small staff and limited supplies, makes do with time-worn facilities and still awaits full computerization.

To get the results of the checkup for her free eye surgery, Silvina Exaltacion, 84, a widow since 1961, arrived at the OPD as early as 8 a.m. last Friday. Hailing from Meycauayan, Bulacan, she came assisted by her son and a son-in-law, who drove them.

"We were told to return at 1 p.m., but by then we're still No. 20 (in the queue)," she said. At 4:30 p.m., the cataract-stricken widow was still waiting for her name to be called.

WAR OF THE VETS

An I-TEAM Report

"Even my son-in-law here had to miss work just because of this," she grumbled.

Passing aggravations

But not everyone in the long, gray-haired line had a sad story to tell. There are veterans and widows who say they do not mind such passing aggravations.

Silvestre Juson, 80, broke into a toothless smile of contentment as he recalled how he had been operated on thrice at the VMMC—for a fractured arm, hernia, and a cataract—all for free.

"From the very start I've never been complaining. What more can I really ask when everything is free?" the former guerrilla fighter said as he left the OPD with wife Victorina after a routine checkup.

He said many veterans like him often don't get the full amount of OPD-prescribed medicines they are supposed to get for free at the department's pharmacy because of limited stocks.

"But that's just fine with me, for I know there are other people in need of such medical supplies from the government, like disaster victims and displaced people in (battle areas in) Mindanao," he said.

Another patient, Jacinto Cinco, 81, took pride in being the "first to use a brand-new, P1.5-million apparatus" when he was confined at the VMMC for pneumonia last November and January.

"We're used to the thick crowd, especially in the mornings. And when the people at the pharmacy say they've run out of my needed medicines, they're polite enough to say so. What can I really do?" said Cinco, another guerrilla, who saw action in Bataan.

Clinic to clinic

Aside from the long waiting period, the long, tiring walk from clinic to clinic also makes the place hard on senior citizens.

"Perhaps there should be more wheelchairs that the hospital can lend to our old folks whenever they have to move from clinic to clinic," said Alexander Adami, whose mother-in-law, Nora Lasala, 76, goes to the OPD for monthly checkups.

While some patients can still manage without wheelchairs, Adami said, the need to move around the OPD area as quickly as possible "leaves them out of breath. They end up getting more frustrated."

The place could also use a little more "PR," said Mrs. Evangelista, the wife of Victor, 79, a former private in the Philippine Constabulary and "Death March" survivor. (Because of his hearing problem, it was she who gave the answers during the interview).

Evangelista said she made it a point to accompany him in view of his hearing loss and because "I will not tolerate it if he (is not) treated well and he will be shouted at just because all these are for free."

She cited instances when she thought some medical personnel had been "disrespectful" to old patients, "especially those who are already hard of hearing or *makukulit* (persistent)."

"Maybe because there are just too many patients to attend to and they are already tired; I can understand. But there should be better public relations," she said.

In the meantime, it's back to the long lines, which continue to move, but slowly, for the country's patriots and their wives.

Veterans denounce ₱1.3B in anomalies

From page A1

sonal accounts and a sheaf of documents. Among its claims: unaudited and unaccounted-for VFP funds amounting to more than P540 million, and anomalous or questionable PVB loans involving some P600 million.

But Beloso, a member of the US Armed Forces in the Far East veteran and "*guerillero*" under the celebrated Macario Peralta, says the real problem lies in "the proxy vote. That is the root of all evil."

Under Republic Act No. 3518, the law which created the PVB in 1963, at least 51 percent of the bank's capital stock was fully subscribed by the national government, "for and in behalf of" veterans and their beneficiaries.

The law ordered the transfer of the shares to the veterans or their beneficiaries within five years. Over time, the bloc of "undelivered" shares grew smaller; today, by most accounts, the undelivered shares account for only 10 percent or so of the PVB.

But Crevo questions both the arithmetic and the moral assumptions behind this accounting. A former high-ranking bank official, who is in a position to know the details of PVB proxy campaigns, refused to be interviewed for personal reasons, but he did tell the INQUIRER that as much as three-fourths of all the proxies may be "illegal."

"Where did the rest of the 'undelivered' (shares) go?" asks Beloso.

"As it is," he says, "(De Ocampo) has usurped the authority of the government to exercise the power of the voting rights. That precisely made him a dictator."

He adds: "He cannot be disqualified because he controls the votes. That is the reason he is running amuck."

"Nobody is brave enough to bring him to court, except this organization," Beloso says. "I will not hesitate to see that he is removed and imprisoned because of these criminal acts."

Crevo, which includes retired generals and colonels as well as heirs of veterans and employees sacked from the old PVB, has filed a special civil action against De Ocampo and several others, including the defense secretary, the nominal head of the VFP.

It took Crevo members some time to raise the money they needed to pay the filing fees, which amount to over P150,000. But they are confident that more and more veterans will come out to support them.

Lawyer Renecio Espiritu, who filed the case before the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City, says the legal action is a landmark in the history of Filipino veterans.

"The veterans are only looking for a group whom they believe will fight for their cause. Now this is the first time in the history of the veterans that there is this organization filing a case against the powers that be. So they (other veterans) will be attracted. '*Parang Petromax sa dagat; kung maliwanag, 'yung mga isda lalapit sa 'yo*' (It's like fishing with a Petromax lamp at night; the light will draw the fish toward you)."

'Awash in money'

For the ordinary veteran who makes do with an old-age pension of P4,500 a month, all the talk about hundreds of millions of pesos in veterans funds is unreal. His daily concern, or that of his survivors, is to put food on the table and medicine in the cabinet.

Every day, for instance, anywhere between 800 and 1,200 veterans queue up at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center, to ask for the free medicine that their patriotic sacrifices have entitled them to. ***(See related story on this page.)***

But the VFP, Beloso says, is "awash in money."

The VFP administers what has come to be known as the Veterans Industrial Area, a 50-hectare property in Taguig City now teeming with over a hundred "locators" or businesses.

DE OCAMPO

BELOSO

Between 1991 and 1999, the VFP's share of the income from the VIA, then managed by VFP Management and Development Corp., amounted to some P100 million. Between 2000 and 2001, when it was managed by the VFP's Management Committee, the VFP earned nearly P90 million.

Also, the same law creating the PVB created the 11-man Board of Trustees of the Veterans of World War II. By law, 20 percent of the net profit of the PVB goes to the board. Between 1992, when the bank reopened after bankruptcy forced its closure, and 2001, the board's share amounted to at least P350 million.

But Crevo claims that none of these funds, totaling more than P540 million, has been sufficiently accounted for. Its members question why the 42-year-old federation with multiple sources of income—all of it tax-free—can only show a net worth of some P22 million as of Sept. 30, 2001.

Beloso, a licensed real estate appraiser, also questions why the Taguig property's value (a minimum of P1 billion, at a modest P2,000 per square meter, he says) is not reflected as an asset of the VFP.

Col. Juanito Recio, who used to administer the VIA as head of the VFP Mancom, questions why VIA revenue is booked merely in the cash flow report.

"We know there is something wrong with the way the veterans organizations are handled," the 78-year-old Korean War veteran says.

Recio is part of a group suing De Ocampo and other VFP officials for illegal termination. After two years at the Mancom, when revenues were at a record high, Recio and his 11-man team were told that their services were no longer needed.

The wonder of it, he says, is that De Ocampo, as ex-officio head, also enjoyed separation benefits.

There is another 50-hectare property, this time inside Fort Bonifacio, that Beloso says was donated by then President Ferdinand Marcos in 1965 to all veterans.

"Marcos donated 50 hectares. That is for all veterans of all organizations. But what did De Ocampo do? He treated this goddamn 50 hectares as the personal property of the VFP. What has he done with the 50 hectares? It is the source of graft and corruption."

He estimates that even at a scaled-down price of P3,000 per sq.m., the Bonifacio property is worth at least P1.5 billion. None of it is reflected in the VFP's balance sheet, he adds.

Other items in the VFP's accounting are eyebrow-raising, too.

A close look at the VFP's "Statements of Receipts & Disbursements" for the period from Jan. 1 to Sept. 30, 2001, for example, shows that over P3.5 million was spent on contingencies, P1.3 million for allowances to officers, P7 million for litigation expenses, P4 million for the VFP General Assembly—and only P2 million for medical assistance.

The year-ago figures show that the VFP spent P1.6 million for contingencies, P1.1 million for allowances to officers, P372,000 for litigation expenses, and nothing for the General Assembly—and only P1.1 million for medical assistance.

The net result of these fluctuating categories, Crevo members say, is the impression that the VFP's accounting method is too flexible: whatever receipts come in are force-matched by disbursements. This much is clear: the bulk of the VFP's expenses does not go to medicine.

"What is the veterans federation for, if it cannot even help the poorest of the poor?" Beloso asks.

Ghost members?

This is not the first time Beloso and De Ocampo have tangled. Last year, the VFP sought the disqualification of Beloso's party-list organization, Veterans Care and Welfare, but in a remarkable reversal, Beloso's countersuit, against the Veterans Federation Party, was the one that prospered.

"(They were) very greedy. De Ocampo tried to disqualify my organization from the party list election . . . He started the war by submitting a motion to disqualify the Veterans Care and Welfare organization of which I was chairman," Beloso says.

"I discovered that there were two major points: it is a government-sponsored organization and they are not marginalized," he says, adding: "The irony is I disqualified them. I was alone against six of their lawyers."

Both war heroes, Beloso and De Ocampo have much in common.

"Some 15 years ago, I was appointed (by De Ocampo) as district officer of the VFP. I was given a list of 250 members under me," Beloso says. "I read the list of members under me. I could not identify a single one that I know!"

"I was a little bit naïve. In a loud voice, I said, 'Manny, *papaano ito* (How is this)? You're giving me members that I do not know?' *Napahiya siya doon* (He was embarrassed)."

"What is the meaning?" Beloso asks now. "His organization may be . . . (just) on paper. That's why we need to check how many members alive that are still in the organization. For all we know... his members do not exist."

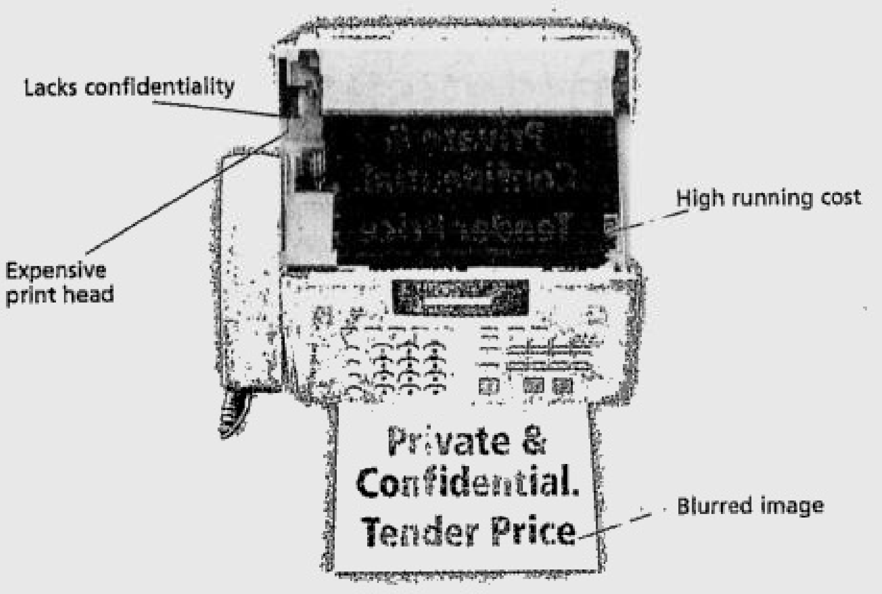
"The bad thing with this is, he made many politicians believe that he could help in the elections because he has so many members—when in fact and in truth, those are ghost members," he says.

Beloso and his group say they know what they are up against. "We are opening now a Pandora's box. This case may be sensational. We are now grandfathers . . . we have to show to the young generation the kind of moral values that we cherish. We cannot stand to see this veterans group suffer under the mismanagement and under the graft-and-corrupted (leadership of De Ocampo)."

Beloso, who spends his spare time exhorting his colleagues to experience spiritual conversion, says he is confident that the lawsuit Crevo has filed will prosper.

"Because the law is in our favor, it is 100 percent in our favor." ***(Tomorrow: PVB anomalies?)***

Which fax would you rather choose?



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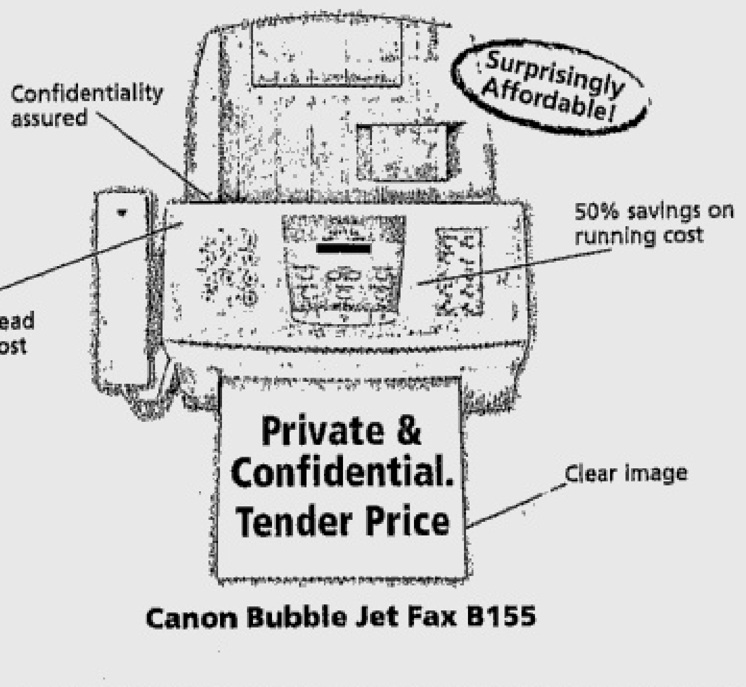

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SUPERLOTTO 6/49

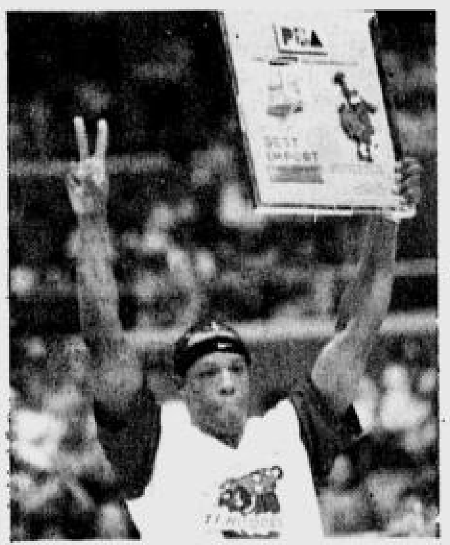
13 42 15 47 44 34

SPORTS

Editor Al S. Mendoza ◎ Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

Crowd walks out on Hamed

LONDON—The fans walked out on Naseem Hamed on Saturday as the former IBF and WBO featherweight champion began his comeback with a unanimous but dismal points verdict over Spaniard Manuel Calvo. Hamed, slow and unimaginative, made his first fight in 13 months since he was given a boxing lesson by Marco Antonio Barrera. **AP**


ROMY HOMILLADA

BROWN: Best import.

Hotdogs equalize

GAME TOMORROW *(Araneta Coliseum)*
6:30 p.m.—Purefoods vs Alaska

By June Navarro

PUREFOODS continued its amazing rise as the Hotdogs stunned Alaska, 82-76, and evened up matters in the Samsung Governors Cup Finals at the Araneta Coliseum last night.

Derrick Brown proved he was indeed the best import of the conference as he scored a conference-high 46 points that enabled the Hotdogs to tie the Aces at 2-2 in their best-of-seven showdown.

"He (Brown) was magnificent. But credit should also go to the locals, especially to Roger Yap and Rey Evangelista," said Purefoods interim coach Ryan Gregorio, whose Hotdogs became the third team in the last four conferences to level a best-of-seven title series at 2-all after a 0-2 start.

Now, the Hotdogs are threatening to become the first team to come back from a 0-2 deficit in a best-of-seven duel and win the championship. Toyota did it against San Miguel Beer in the 1982 Reinforced All-Filipino Conference.

Meanwhile, Rey Evangelista of Purefoods ran away with the best player of the conference award after beating Alaska's Don Allado and Boybits Victoria of San Miguel Beer.

Scores:

PUREFOODS (82)—Brown 46, Evangelista 10, Yap 9, Price 7, Raymundo 5, Magsanoc 3, Patrimonio 2, Yee 0, Victoria 0

ALASKA (76)—Head 23, Arigo 15, Allado, 13, Riley 12, Lastimosa 5, Santos 5, Wallkvist 2, Gahol 0, Noble 0

Quarter scores: 20-14, 40-41, 63-55, 82-76

LBC, RCPI forge finals

GAME SATURDAY
(USLS Coliseum, Bacolod City)
6 p.m.—RCPI Negros vs LBC Batangas

OLONGAPO CITY—Nobody was looking, so Tonyboy Espinosa broke loose for a drive that lifted LBC Batangas past Olongapo, 76-75, and into the finals of the MBA First Conference at the packed Olongapo Convention Center yesterday.

Espinosa's marginal looper with 52 seconds to go sailed past the outstretched arms of Jeffrey Flowers as the Blades topped the Northern Conference and forged a best-of-five title showdown with the RCPI Negros Slashers, the Southern Conference topnotchers, starting on Saturday.

The Volunteers had a chance to reverse the outcome, but Flowers flubbed a jumper in the last play and failed to atone for a missed freethrow earlier that would have sent the game into overtime.

Meanwhile, MBA Commissioner Chito Loyzaga ordered stricter security measures for the First Conference finals starting on Saturday after a bomb was found in a garbage bin of the USLS food court, which was near the coliseum where RCPI negros nipped professional Davao, 93-90, Saturday night in their own knockout semifinal.

MBA marketing and business development director Ramon Tuason said the police found the bomb at 8:30 p.m. and bomb disposal experts detonated it when all the fans had left.

Scores:

BATANGAS 76—Sanders 27, Compton 19, Laure 12, Espinosa 6, De Castro 6, Rivera 5, Corbin 1, Martin 0, Cuevas 0, Ramirez 0.

OLONGAPO 75—Flowers 18, Patrimonio 13, Dualan 13, Encarnacion 13, Fernandez 9, Tan 5, Cardel 4, Orfrecio 0, Robinson 0.

Quarters: 23-26, 35-46, 54-59; 76-75.

Philippine amateur on at Eagle Ridge

ONLY one player had won the Philippine amateur golf championship three consecutive times in the last 52 years. For Angelo Que, the chance to make himself a three-peat winner like the legendary Luis "Golem" Silverio has come.

History beckons when the 23-year-old Que makes his farewell appearance in the national championship starting today at the tough Faldo course of the Eagle Ridge Golf Club in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

"I can only hope copying Golem's three-peat is part of my destiny," said Que, who wasn't even born yet when Silverio pulled off his three-peat in 1972.

Que leads a cast of 76 players teeing off for the first round of a 36-hole qualifying phase that will determine the 32-man match play roster which is being used for the first time in recent memory.

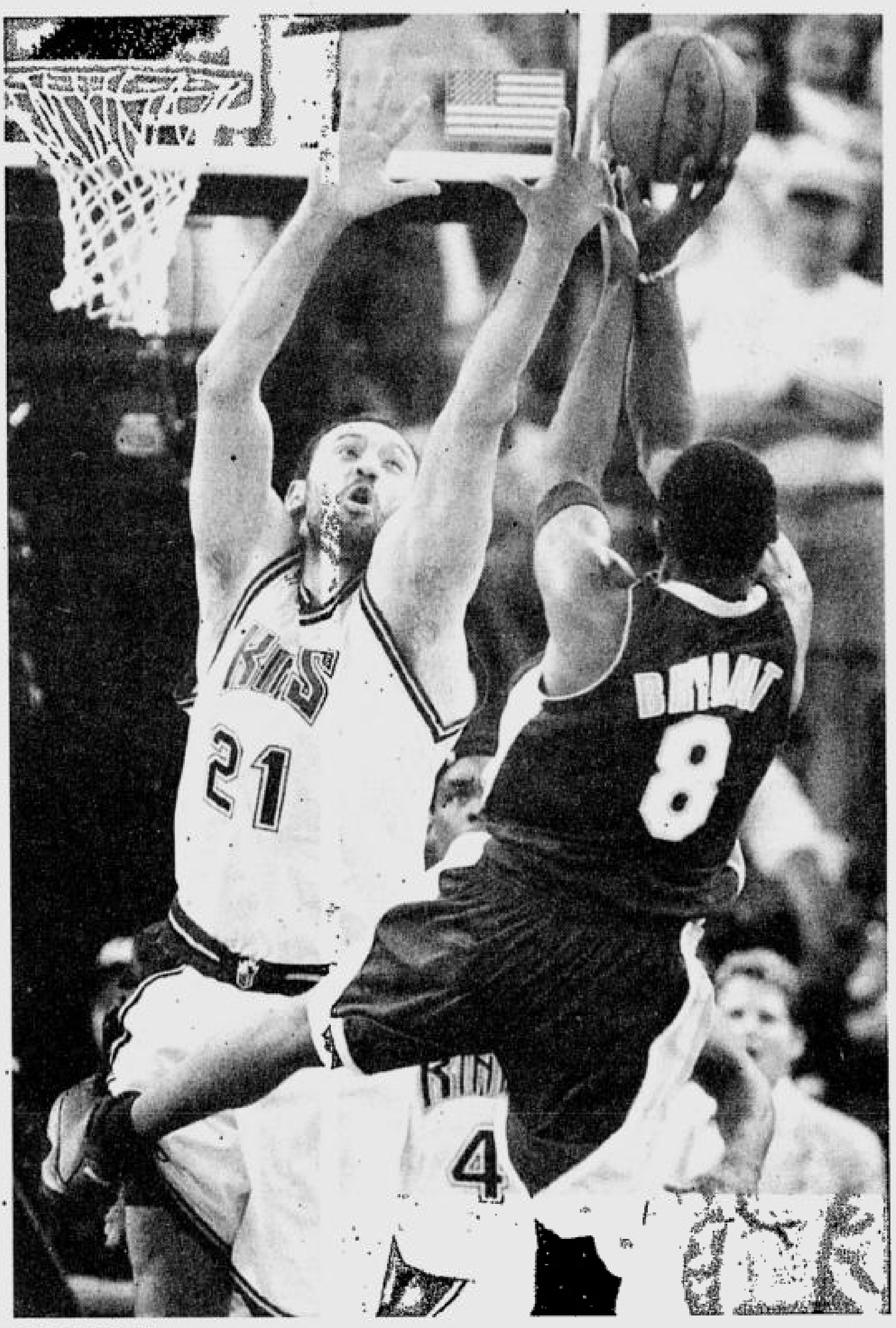
Que had already announced he is turning pro after he completes his call of duty for the national team this year which is expected to include the Asian Games in Busan, Korea.

It will be a tall order for Que fighting off the pressure to complete his march to amateur greatness as a heavy favorite. He goes into the RP amateur already with the Philippine Open low amateur and the Manila Amateur—major events which were held at Wack Wack—tucked under his belt.

The challengers are led by the other members of the national training pool: Southeast Asian Games gold medalist Juvic Pagunsan, Jerome Delariarte, Cookie LaO and Marlon Dizon.

Preceding the 7:30 a.m. tee-off is the hitting of ceremonial balls by top officials of the sponsoring DHL Philippines and Wide Wide World Express, Joe Feliciano and Mike Fitzpatrick and Rod Feliciano of the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines.

Aside from DHL and WWW Express, the tourney is also sponsored in part by Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Inc. and the Philippine Sports Commission.


AP

KOBE SHOT

Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant (8) makes a fadeaway shot against Sacramento Kings' Vlade Divac in Game 1 of their NBA Western Conference Finals Saturday night in Sacramento. Bryant scored 30 points, while Shaquille O'Neal added 26 as the Lakers prevailed, 106-99. Game 2 of the best-of-seven series is Monday night (Tuesday morning in Manila), also at Sacramento.

RP runner grabs silver medal in 4As

By Marc Anthony Reyes

EDUARDO Buenavista made a gallant stand against a competitor goaded endlessly by the hometown crowd to finish second in the men's 3,000m run Saturday in the first leg of the Asian Amateur Athletics Association Grand Prix in Hyderabad, India.

He clocked a new Philippine record of 8 minutes and 19 seconds, two seconds behind the Indian.

The lone Filipino invited in this tournament for Asia's elite, Buenavista kept himself abreast with the leaders before his Indian counterpart made a frenetic dash to the finish line in the final 100 meters.

Philippines' athletics chief Go Teng Kok said they don't consider the Indian to be a strong contender in the Asian Games. The contestant Buenavista is likely to face in the Asiad is the Korean, who wound up third.

"Eduard gave a fine performance and I'm sure he will be a lot better in the next two legs," said Go. "However, we still have to make sure that the same athletes can get through the Philippines for the Manila leg."

Go was talking about some 50 foreign athletes now competing in the Grand Prix who have yet to get their RP visa. He added that they will all be accompanied by 4As officials to the Philippine embassy in Thailand today.

NCA 7-cock tourney gets going

EVERYTHING is set for the resumption of the star-studded NCA 7-Cock Derby today (Monday) with the staging of the three-cock elimination matches at the air-conditioned Araneta Coliseum. It will be hosted by Louie Cua, Boy de Roca and Meycauayan Mayor Eddie Alarilla.

Competing are the country's leading cocker-breeders such as Nene Araneta, Danding Cojuangco, James Chiongbian, former Rizal Gov. Ito Ynares, two-time Cocker of the Year Jun Santiago, Pampanga's famous Jun and Rudy Jingco, World Slasher champion Dicky Lim, the Madlambayan brothers, noted breeder Boy Jiao, Alex and Gerry Escalona, Boy Lechon and RQP, Jessie Viceo, Vic Amante, Iking Araneta, Ram Lopez, Eddie and Bomboy Araneta and Ruel Ricafort.

Price Smart-PMA '78 tilt set

THE MAKATARUNGAN Foundation is the prime beneficary of the Price Smart-PMA Class'78 Golf Classic slated on June 8 at the hazard-laden Camp Aguinaldo Golf Club course. Tee-off starts at 6 a.m.

The 18-hole fund-raiser has drawn the major backing of Price Smart, formerly known as the S&R Price Membership Shopping, and several corporate individual backers, according to Col. Delfin Bangid, chair of the organizing committee.

Colonel Bangid said that among the objectives of the Makatarungan Foundation is to provide scholarships grants for children of deceased classmates.

Tickets are priced at P1,500.

The annual event, which draws around 200 players composed of Philippine Military Academy alumni and guests, has been a major contributor for the various activities and projects of the Makatarungan Foundation.

Woods just 2 off

HEIDELBERG, Germany—Tiger Woods never really got out of second gear in the second round of the Deutsche Bank-SAP Open Saturday but he is still lurking ominously just two shots off the pace.

Colin Montgomerie and Alex Cejka shared the lead with four players a shot behind and Woods shared 7th place. **AP**

John O, Kutitap dispute 5th slot

By Dennis U. Eroa

KUTITAP Toothpaste meets John O today in the playoff for the fifth and last semifinals slot in the PBL Chairman's Cup at the Pasig Sports Center.

Gametime is set at 4 p.m. Kutitap and John O split their elimination round matches and experts predict a thrilling clash for the third time as the Sparklers and the Juzzers try to enter the five-team semifinals.

Ateneo-Hapee-Negros Navigation, ICTSI-La Salle, Blu Sun Power and Shark Energy Drink have already earned tickets to the semis.

Kutitap plays a disciplined kind of game, while John O, a rookie team, sizzles with its uptempo style and focuses on the inside plays of 6-foot-5 slotman Ranidel de Ocampo.

High-leaping Cyrus Baguio, Nino Gelig, Allan Salangsang, Mark Saquilayan and Ryan Dy banner Kutitap's attack against John O which is composed mostly of rising stars from the National University.

US Kids slots to be contested

SLOTS to the US Kids championships in Virginia, USA will be disputed in the Canlubang Jungolf Open, the eighth and penultimate leg of the Philippine Airlines-backed Jungolf summer circuit starting tomorrow.

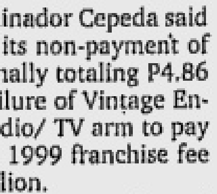
The 54-hole tourney is being conducted by the Canlubang Golf and Country Club headed by Luigi Yulo in support of youth development and sanctioned by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines.

At least 150 of the country's top jungolfers are expected to swing into action but much of the focus will be on the lower divisions where the country's 12 bets to the US Kids tourney set in the last week of July will be picked.

Only players 12 years and below are eligible for the US Kids but the RP contingent will be a selection of top players in three age classifications.

Unbelievable? PBA owes GAB P1.4M

CLEAN LIVING



Manolo R. Iñigo

WOULD you believe that the Philippine Basketball Association, supposedly awash with cash, still owes the Games and Amusements Board some P1.4 million representing the GAB's share of the accumulated income from the radio and television rights dating back to 1999? Also, would you believe that the PBA has not paid its monthly remittance to the GAB of P143,000 (an amount which is "chicken feed" by PBA standards) for the first quarter of the year 2002?

Unbelievable? Yes, but of course. I never thought that the PBA, composed of the country's biggest and richest business firms with millions at their disposal, could still fail to remit in full the 3% share of the GAB after all these years and, oddly still, unable to settle its monthly obligations promptly.

Last Friday, when pressed by the GAB to settle this account, PBA Commissioner Jun Bernardino and deputy Sonny Barrios, told GAB Chair Eduardo Villanueva that they would give an answer after their scheduled meeting that same day with Vic del Rosario, the big boss of the Viva Vintage Group, the present radio/television arm of the league. When I broke out the story some months back, then GAB Chair Dominador Cepeda said the PBA had claimed that its non-payment of the GAB's 3% share (originally totaling P4.86 million) was due to the failure of Vintage Enterprises Inc., the PBA's radio/ TV arm to pay the league its outstanding 1999 franchise fee in the amount of P162 million.

Last Saturday morning, I called up the office of Commissioner Bernardino and deputy Barrios to get the PBA side, but an office secretary said both were unavailable.

Being the first professional basketball league in Asia, the PBA is now slowly sinking to its lowest level since its grand launching in 1975. It is losing its luster and suffering from poor gate receipts during most games, including the ongoing Governors' Cup championship series where one can see rows and rows of empty seats at the Araneta Coliseum. What went wrong? I understand it is even switching TV channels in future conferences. Is it true?

***

BOHOL'S SPORTING GREATS. Basilio Cunehan of Catmanan, Bohol, recently submitted several names, saying that his far flung province is not lacking in sporting heroes. Among them, he said, were: Simeon Toribio, the greatest Filipino high jumper who won the bronze medal for the event in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics and three-time Far Eastern Games Champion in 1927, 1930 and 1934; Niño Ramnirez, 1934 Far Eastern Games standout in the broad jump; Lauro Mumar, basketball Hall of Famer and his son Larry; Bernard Fabiosa, Jessie Sullano, Luke Dacula and Mark Arriola, who all made waves in basketball; amateur boxer Leopoldo Serantes, bronze medal winner in the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games; and Roberto Jalnaiz, Asiad medalist; and Bobby Berna, one-time world professional boxing champion.

***

For inquiries, call fax/phone (044)933-1214

Golden Ballet prevails

FAR second choice Golden Ballet stole the show by winning the Cojuangco Cup, first leg of the Philippine Triple Crown series, yesterday at the Santa Ana Park.

Beautifully handled by star jockey Jonathan Hernandez, Golden Ballet surged ahead nearing the home turn then turned back longshot Cutting Edge to prevail by a length.

Golden Ballet, last year's Juvenile Filly champion, picked up the P1 million top prize. She negotiated the 1,600-meter race in 1:40.6.

Heavy favorite Unbreakable wound up only third.

Serena shoots down Jennifer

ROME—Serena Williams fought for a tough three-set win over Jennifer Capriati Saturday to reach the finals of the Italian Open.

Williams outlasted her fellow American 6-2, 3-6, 7-5 in two hours, 15 minutes to set up a rematch with Justine Henin in Sunday's final. Last week, Williams lost a third-set tiebreaker to Henin in the German Open championship. **AP**

SPORTS ON TV

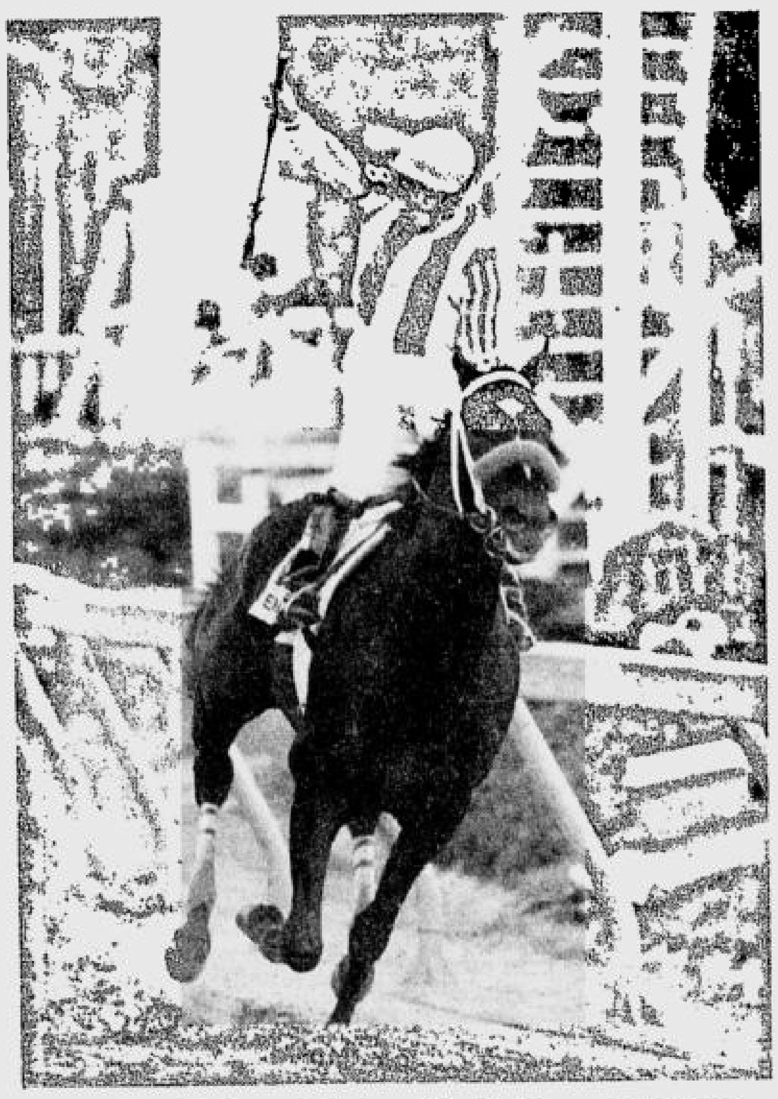
Compiled by Lorenzo Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA Conference Finals – Boston at New Jersey, Game 1 at 5:30 a.m. on ESPN

TENNIS: Masters Series (Hamburg), Men's Semifinal Match #2 at 7 a.m. (r), Final at 7 p.m. on Star Sports

GOLF: PGA Mastercard Colonial, Final Round at 2 p.m. (r – 10 p.m.) on Star Sports

LPGA Chick Fil-A Charity Championship, First Round at 5 p.m. on Star Sports



JOCKEY Victor Espinoza celebrates as War Emblem coasts to victory in the 127th Preakness Stakes, second leg of the US Triple Crown series, in Baltimore, Maryland on Saturday. On June 8, War Emblem aims to rule the Belmont Stakes and become the first thoroughbred since Affirmed in 1978 to win racing's biggest prize. AP

One to go for War Emblem

BALTIMORE—War Emblem is versatile after all, and his victory in the Preakness Stakes has trainer Bob Baffert back in the Triple Crown chase.

The ornery Kentucky Derby winner didn't lead all the way this time, but he held on for a three-quarter length victory Saturday to set up a shot at the Triple Crown in three weeks.

"I like my chances, the third time's a charm," Baffert said, hoping his black colt can win the Belmont Stakes and become the first thoroughbred since Affirmed in 1978 to win racing's biggest prize. "We started with Silver Charm. ... If it's meant to be, it's meant to be."

On June 8, Baffert will get his third chance in six years to win a Triple Crown. And it's all because War Emblem showed up in his barn just five weeks ago, thanks to a last-minute purchase by Baffert's friend, Prince Ahmed bin Salman.

Baffert's Silver Charm in 1997 and Real Quiet in 1998 both won the Derby and Preakness but fell short in the Belmont; Silver Charm by three-quarters of a length to Touch Gold and Real Quiet by a nose to Victory Gallop. *AP*

Subic triathlon slated June 2

A STRONG field of at least 50 foreign and 200 local triathletes are set to join the hunt for the pot totaling P500,000 in this year's edition of the Subic Bay International Triathlon, highlight of the triathlon season, at the Subic Bay Freeport on June 2.

Among the countries with confirmed entries, Hong Kong will field triathletes led by former Asian junior champion Lee Chi Wo who is eyeing a three-peat in this ITU event where the top finishers gain points for the world ranking. Lee will be challenged by crack triathletes from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Japan.

Powerhouse Japan will send six triathletes, same with Singapore, India five, Thailand four and the Netherlands three to this popular stop of the Asia Cup series sponsored by the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, POC, Philippine Sports Commission, Enervon, Hotel La Corona, Gerry's Grill, Asia Pacific Insulation Corp and Speedo.

Expatriates based in the country, at the very least, are expected to represent Great Britain and the United States in this 1.5 kilometer swim, 40-km bike and 10-km grind.

Tom Carrasco, president of the organizing Triathlon Association of the Philippines (TRAP) and member of the ITU executive board, said "We are glad that after 11 years SUBIT still enjoys popularity among Asian and world-class triathletes despite the relatively small prize money and proliferation of biathlons in the aftermath of biathlon's debut in the Olympics."

SPORTSWATCH

Mandaluyong derby

LOCAL and international derby champions gird for the 2002 Mandaluyong 9-Cock International Derby second leg on June 4, 6 and 8 at the Mandaluyong Coliseum. The event will be supported by the Untied Cockers Association of the Philippines. Veteran pitfighter Jun Marasigan of Batangas, one of three champions in last January's Mandaluyong 9-Cock International derby, will be parading a new imported fowls from Saipan that are well noted for it's precision-cutting and hit-and-run fighting style.

Leongson sparkles

TALISAY CITY—Shell-Yamaha's Ernie Leongson ruled both the Pro Open and Pro 125 and shoved fierce rival and teammate Jovie Saulog into the backseat in the WG&A National Motocross 3rd leg at the Ayala North Point, Negros Occidental here. Leongson topped the Pro 125 with 40 points, and then Pro Open later in the afternoon, with 40 points to completely obliterate the challenge of Saulog in the 3rd leg of the series supported by WG&A Superferry and organized by the Hartebeest Entertainment.

Paeng leads 'em

RP team mainstays led by four-time World Cup champion Paeng Nepomuceno are among the frontrunners in the ongoing eliminations of the Powerbowl Perfect 300 Challenge at the Power Plant Mall in Rockwell Center. Nepomuceno has so far amassed a three-game series of 2121 pinfalls to rank among the players expected to qualify in the May 25 finals of the meet sponsored by Prudential Guarantee, windows Café, PLDT, Lockheed Group, Philippine-Sundt, Boysen Paints, Hi-Integra, Summa Kumagai Inc., Burgoo and Dish.

Superbody tilt

FOURTEEN female and male bikini models will comprise the finalists in the Mr. & Ms Superbody Bikini Contest at 9:30 p.m. on May 23 at Padi's Mindave Restaurant Bar in Mindanao Avenue corner Congressional Avenue, Quezon City. All of them will win free Boracay vacations and many big prizes from Fashion 21 Aido Cosmetics, Barbizon, Beachcomber Inn Aklan and Boracay Terraces Resort. For details, call 7229981 or text 0917-8135916.

Lhuillier sizzles

CEBU Lhuillier gave the visiting Konkun University of Korea a dose of the tough Cebuano brand of basketball, pulling off a 93-74 win to kick off its National Inter-Club Basketball Championship campaign with a bang at the Cebu Coliseum. Woodrow Enriquez led a balanced scoring run from Lhuillier, which clogged all the shooting lanes from start to finish en route to the convincing victory in this weeklong tournament organized by the Basketball Association of the Philippines. In the first game, Spring Oil beat University of Visayas, 93-87.

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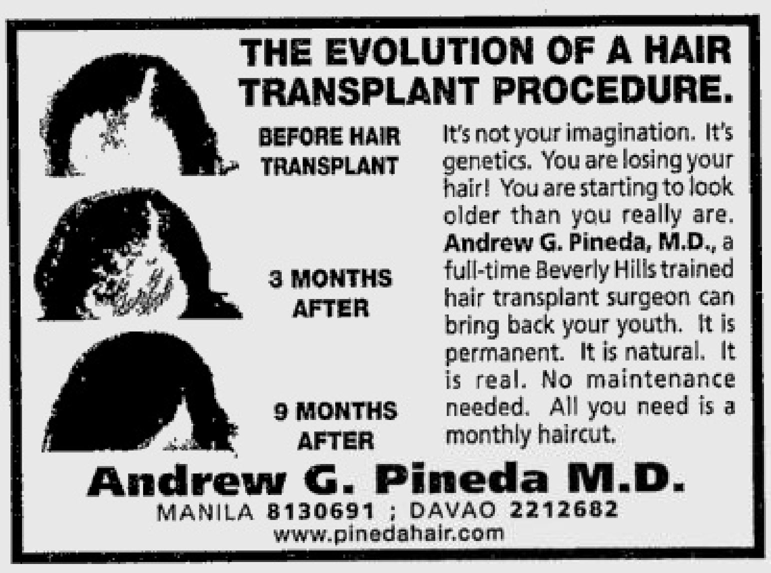

THE EVOLUTION OF A HAIR TRANSPLANT PROCEDURE.
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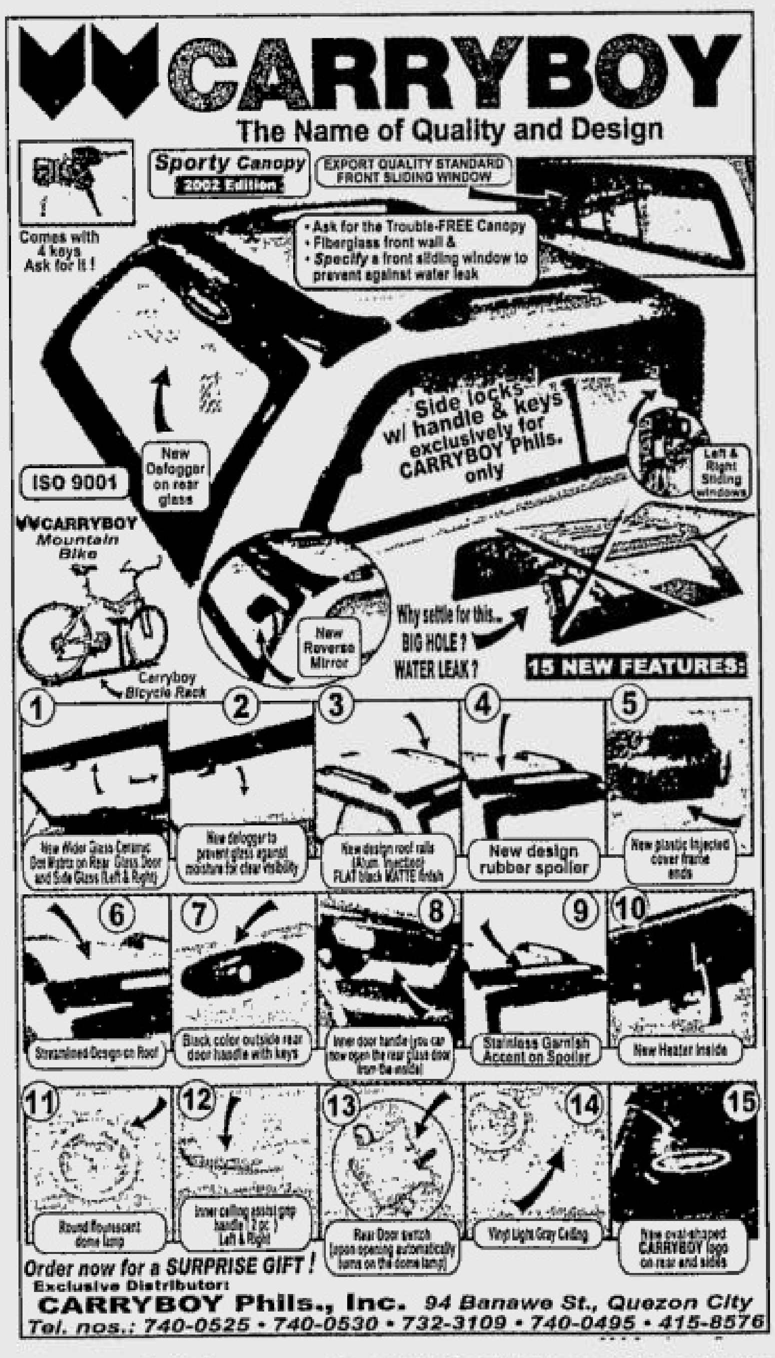

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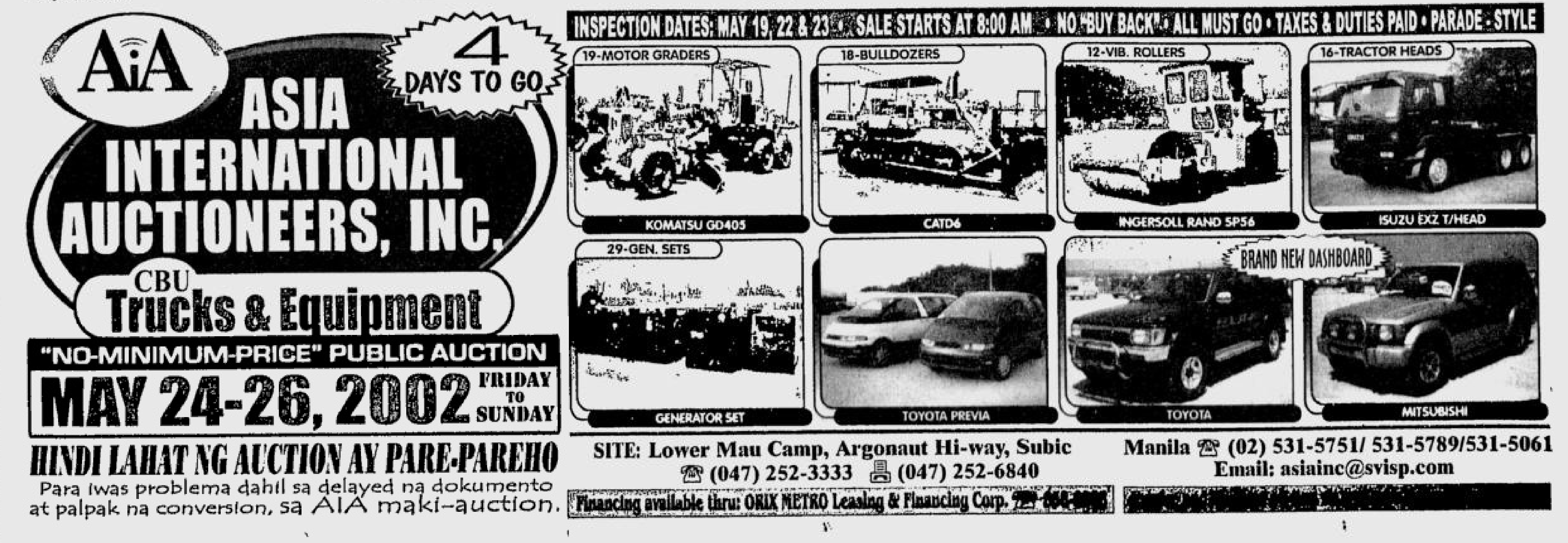

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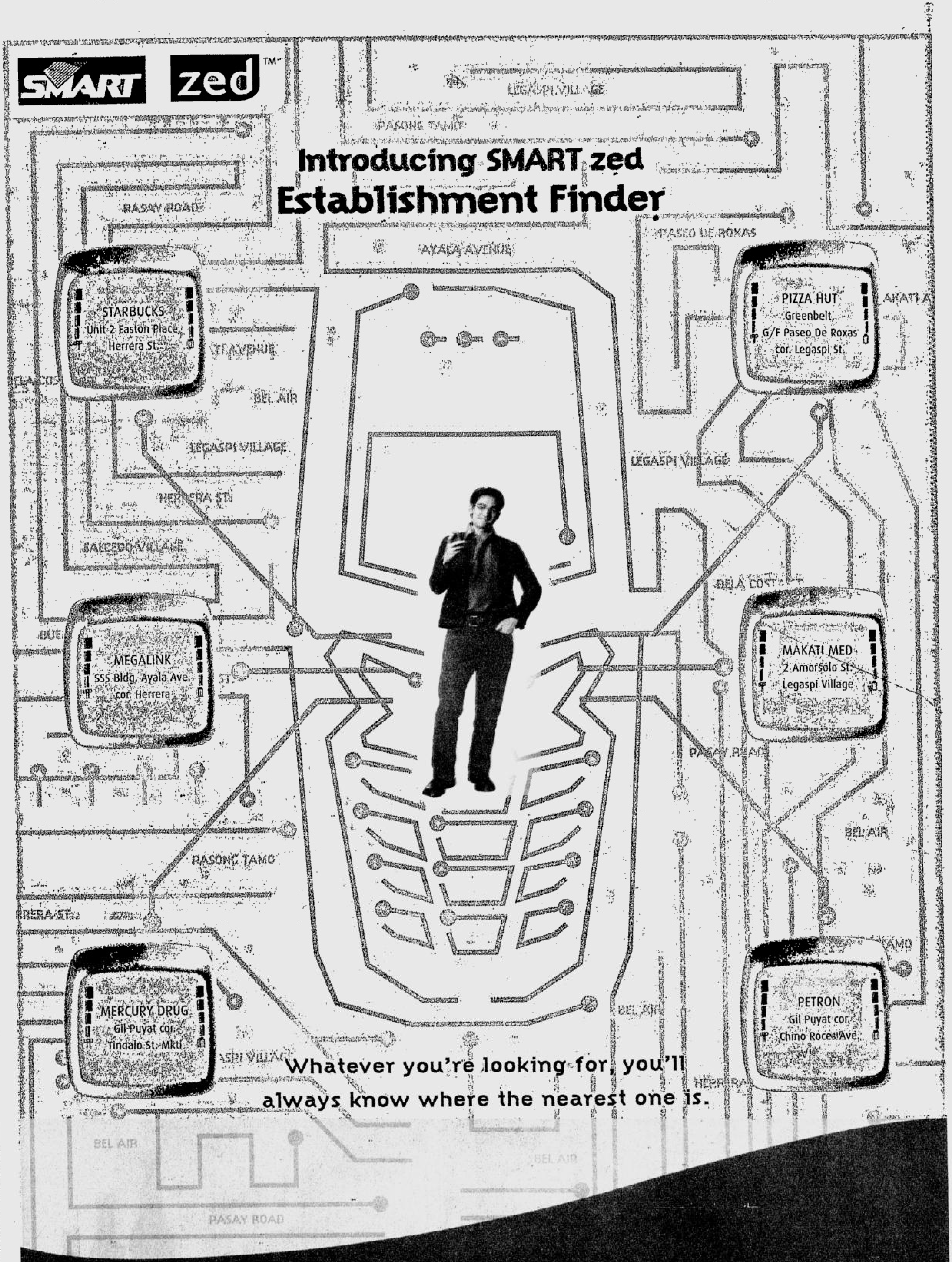
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KFC	KFC
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PIZZA HUT	PIZZAHUT
MR. DONUT	MRDONUT
DUNKIN' DONUTS	DUNKIN
GOLDILOCKS	GOLD
ANDOK'S	ANDOKS
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METRO
Editor Louie C. Camino

L. Erice vs Malonzo's common-law wife
A26

6 inmates dead in 2 weeks

By Philip C. Tubeza and Edson Tandoc Jr.

NOEL B. Estrella became the sixth inmate of the Manila City Jail to die in the squalid prison in a span of two weeks.

Estrella, 35, of Pandacan, Manila, died on Saturday after complaining of difficulty in breathing, according to a report at the Western Police District homicide section.

Police said Estrella died at the Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center.

6 INMATES/ A26

Check your facts, DPWH tells Abalos

By Armand N. Nocum

METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. should first check his facts before going to the press with complaints about DPWH projects.

A public works official on Saturday gave this advise to Abalos who blew his top and castigated the DPWH in a radio interview on Friday for what he

CHECK/ A26

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BACLARAN BASH
The boiling Sunday morning heat does not prevent residents of Baclaran south of Metro Manila from dancing in the streets in weird masks and costumes to celebrate the feast of their patron, St. Rita de Casia.

Final warning for fish port Petron — Tiangco

TODAY is the last day for oil giant Petron Corp. to pay the Navotas municipal government about P10 million in back taxes, according to Navotas Mayor Toby Tiangco.

The mayor threatened to take legal action to shut down the Petron bulk plant in the Navotas Fish Port complex if the oil company fails to pay what it owes the town government.

Tiangco's office last week sent a letter of warning to Petron legal counsel Luis Maglaya. Petron

FINAL/ A26

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ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE
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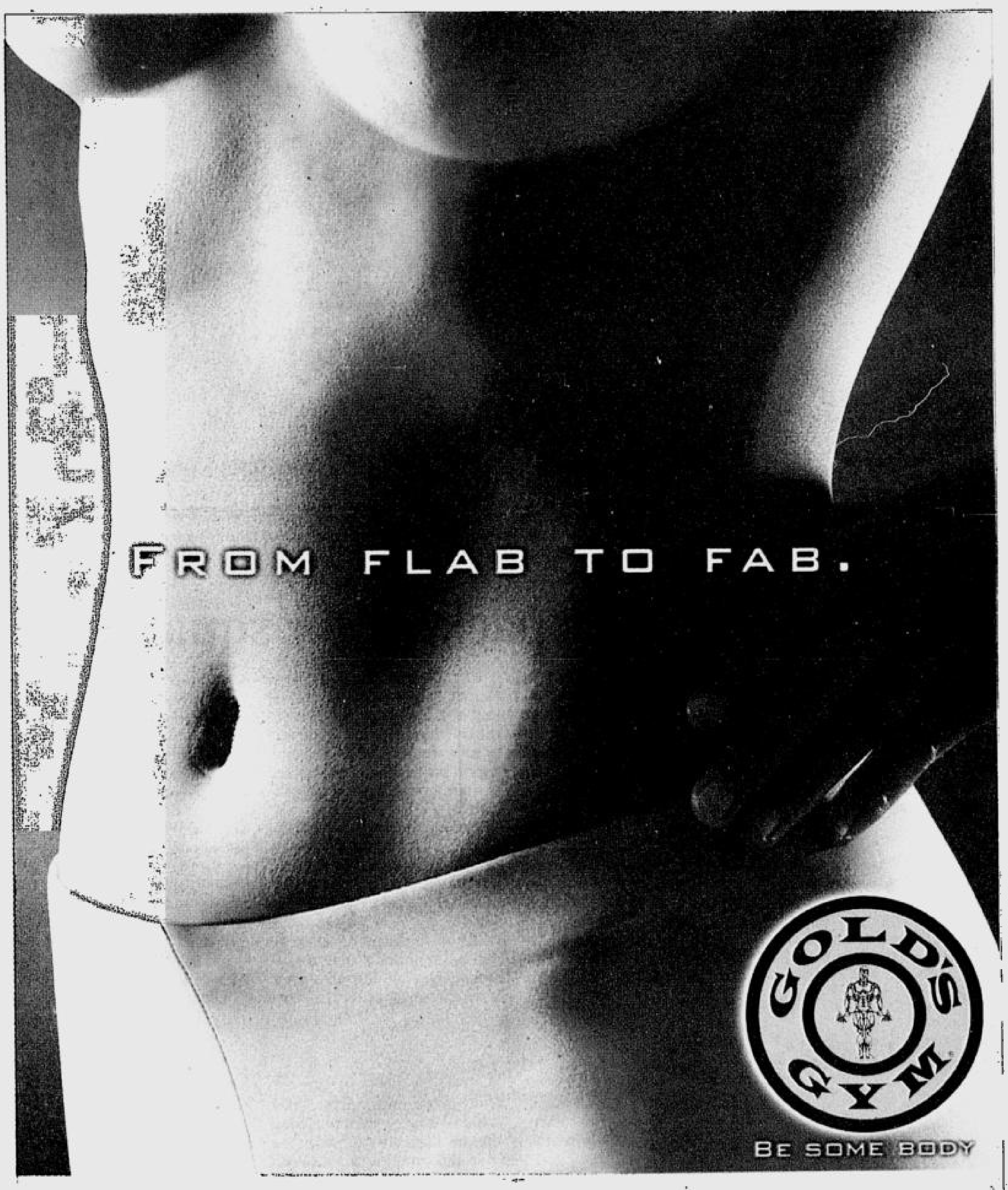
Cowboy Grill 116 ARQUIZA ST. MALATE — GIFTED MIND/ ZEST PERFECT STRANGER — NO ENTRANCE FEE 525.1474/525.4269
Cowboy Grill 451 REMEDIOS ST. MALATE — MR ROXY PARTY-Z-POLE — NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎521.8143
Cowboy Grill NOVALICHES Q.C. — ICE KENDI J BROTHERS — THE DAWN MAY 28 ☎936.9757
KAMPO 2088 #47 WEST AVENUE Q.C. — LADI RAVE — ☎373.5110
TIA MARIA'S REMEDIOS COR CAROLINA ST — ON LINE D'BUMP — ☎522-0429
Tropical FOREST Cafe Grill Restaurant — MOONSTRUCKS — SOUP & SALAD BUFFET FREE DRINKS P350 11AM-2PM ☎400-7438/39
MONDAY MAY 20 912-8983



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CALTEX
What Drives You

Erice vs Malonzo's common-law wife

By Tina Santos

A POLITICAL feud has started between Caloocan City Mayor Rey Malonzo and his longtime ally, District II Rep. Edgar Erice, who has bolted from the Lakas-NUCD.

Erice recently resigned from the political party after Malonzo's reported announcement that he would field his common-law wife, Gigi Emnace, as Lakas-NUCD's candidate for mayor in the 2004 elections.

Malonzo, a former movie actor, is on his third and final term as mayor.

Erice denied he was vying for the mayoral seat, saying the main reason he left the party was what he called the looming political dynasty in the city.

"Our political campaign was anti-political dynasty," Erice said last week. "In fact, we (he and Malonzo) fought the Asistios during the campaign. And now he will make his wife run in the election without even consulting us (local party members)?"

The congressman insisted that Emnace's plan to run for mayor without consultation with Lakas party members is Malonzo's "ploy to perpetuate himself in power as mayor of Caloocan."

Erice said only city officials who have a clean track record and young people who have the skills and capabilities to hold a public position are qualified to run in the elections.

"They are the people who should vie for public office and not the wife or relative of so-and-so," he said. "Just because the official is popular, the wife would also run even when she is not capable? If local officials are elected based on popularity and affinity rather than capability, what will happen to our local government?"

He said "there should be a system of meritocracy in terms of who should be the local officials, especially the mayor, because these positions require training, capability and experience," which according to him Emnace doesn't possess.

"I don't think Gigi Emnace would be capable of holding a position in government," he said.

Before Erice's resignation, he had lamented that he already suffered "retribution" like the retrenchment of 42 casual employees of city hall most of whom he recommended. He said 10 of the 42 belonged to his staff.

He said these employees, who served the city government for six to seven years, had not received their salary for almost four months now.

Erice submitted his resignation to Vice President Teofisto Guingona, president of Lakas-NUCD. He said he might join the Liberal Party.

ERICE

MALONZO

ENROLL NOW!
WE ARE PROUD TO BE PASIGUEÑO WE LOVE PASIG

BOUNDARY BATTLE
Residents of Barangay Pinagbuhatan, Pasig City held a quiet rally last Saturday to denounce the claim on what they insist is their land by the neighboring town of Cainta, Rizal. They said land titles prove that the disputed land is part of Pasig territory. The Pasig-Cainta land dispute has been going on for years.

3 more Ecstasy suspects nabbed in Makati bust

By Christian V. Esguerra

A BUSINESSWOMAN and two men suspected of dealing in the illegal substance Ecstasy were arrested in Makati City in what police called "a breakthrough" in their crackdown on the proliferation of the high-end drug.

Members of the Drug Enforcement Unit arrested businesswoman Violeta Tan, 49, former club bouncer Moe Semillano, 36, and club employee Balbino Jamao-as, 42, during a buy-bust operation about 10 p.m. on Saturday across the Go Go Bananas Club on P. Burgos Street in Makati City.

DEU chief Gary Reyes yesterday said Semillano and Jamao-as had long been on the police watch list as suspected pushers of the high-end drug to nightspots on P. Burgos Street.

Jamao-as works as a doorman at Go Go Bananas.

"We consider the arrests a breakthrough in our campaign to rid Makati of illegal drugs, particularly Ecstasy," Reyes said.

Tan, Jamao-as, and Semillano were caught in the act of selling of Canadian Green, an Ecstasy variant, for P1,200 each to PO2 Virginio Costa who acted as a buyer, police said.

The suspects were detained at the Makati police headquarters.

Makati authorities intensified their anti-narcotics drive after the city was labeled the "Ecstasy Capital of Metro Manila." The illegal drug was believed to be circulated in the many watering holes in the area.

UP plans relocation package for squatters

By Agnes E. Donato

THE ADMINISTRATION of the University of the Philippines is eyeing a new relocation package for some of the 35 families evicted during the demolition last week in Barangay San Vicente, Quezon City.

UP Diliman Vice Chancellor for Community Affairs Gil Gotiangco II announced this even as evicted residents maintained their barricade to prevent authorities from clearing up their possessions.

Gotiangco said that he had met with Presidential Commission on Urban Poor Chair Percival Chavez, representatives of the Quezon City Urban Poor Affairs Office and a non-government organization to discuss possible options that would resolve the issue.

But Gotiangco refused to elaborate on the options, saying they were "still on the drawing board."

He also clarified that "UP has resorted to all possible measures to come up with a package acceptable to the illegal settlers since September 2001."

He stressed that "as an educational institution, UP is not obligated to offer such relocation packages."

UP President Francisco Nemenzo asked activist priest Fr. Robert Reyes of the Parish of the Holy Sacrifice in UP Diliman to act as intermediary in the negotiations between the affected residents and university officials.

Nemenzo also referred the matter to UP Diliman Chancellor Emerlinda Roman, who he said was "the proper official to deal with the issue since it is a Diliman affair."

The university president promised to facilitate a meeting between Reyes and Roman as soon as the chancellor arrives from her Singapore trip.

UP Student Regent JPaul Manzanilla and concerned student groups such as the University Student Council and Anakbayan have joined the residents in a vigil at the demolished site.

"UP, as Vice Chancellor Gotiangco claims, is indeed an educational institution, a university for the people at that," USC chair Rommel Romato. "The UP administration should recognize the fact that the UP community is composed not only of students, faculty members and employees but also of residents in the surrounding barangays."

Check your . . .

From page A25

said was their failure to coordinate with him on the implementation of projects that could cause traffic jams.

"He should have called us and we would have told him that the bridge repair in Mandaluyong will not start until the end of July," said Subair Diron, DPWH project manager of Asian Development Bank-funded projects.

Diron confirmed that by July, the DPWH will start repair works on Tulahan Bridge in Valenzuela, which will cost P43 million, and on Sevilla Bridge in Mandaluyong, which will cost P27 million.

A third project is the P37-million repair of the La Huerta Bridge in Parañaque.

All the repair works are funded by the ADB.

Friday morning, an angry Abalos said the DPWH should have given him notice of the repairs, which he said he learned about only on radio that very morning. He said the lack of coordination between the MMDA and the DPWH would affect the opening of classes in June.

Diron said DPWH officials were working on a traffic scheme, but they did not deem it necessary to bring it to the MMDA this early.

"They reacted too early," he said of the MMDA. "We have to submit the proposed traffic plan to the contractor before bringing it to the MMDA." He said the contractor has a say on the plan because the contractor will prepare the ground for re-routing.

Diron said the contract with the O.R. Sarmiento construction firm is still being processed and "notice to proceed" will be issued in late June. The contractor will be given another month to bring in heavy equipment to prepare the site, he said.

"Maybe he (Abalos) was misinformed," he said. "These projects will not affect classes."

DPWH National Capital Region Director Antonio Sta. Elena said that as a matter of policy, they coordinate all their key projects with the MMDA.

"They (MMDA) have the expertise and resources in traffic management and control, so we have to sit down with them on such matters," said Sta. Elena.

6 inmates dead . . .

From page A25

Jail guard J01 Salvador Tan told investigators that Estrella complained of body pains and difficulty in breathing.

Estrella was taken to the jail infirmary, but doctors there decided to send him to the JRRMMC after his condition deteriorated. He did not live through the night, dying at 7:25 p.m. despite doctors' efforts to save him.

Inmates Jessie Espendido, 33, and Jerry Ambrosio, in his early 20s, both died on May 14.

Espendido, imprisoned for a drug case, also complained of difficulty in breathing. Ambrosio, a Bahala Na Gang member, died after he allegedly slipped on the floor and slammed his head on the concrete.

The week before, two other inmates died after they complained of difficulty in breathing. Another prisoner also died last week, but from tuberculosis.

Police investigators blamed the deaths on the squalid conditions in the city jail. They said the prison cells are too crowded and dirty, and the ventilation system is poor.

Jail officials could not be contacted yesterday. The jail's phone lines were also down.

Final warning . . .

From page A25

owes Navotas P10,204,916.17 in business taxes since 1998, the letter said.

"Petron is not exactly a financially struggling company," Tiangco said, adding that Navotas is only trying to collect its due.

"Petron should pay the back taxes first, even if under protest, and then it can go to court later to contest our claim," he said.

The Petron bulk plant supplies fuel to fishing vessels in the fish port, although other oil firms can also bring fuel to the port, Tiangco said in a radio interview. Navotas calculated that the bulk plant grossed close to P5 million in sales from 1997 to 2001.

The mayor said the money to be collected from Petron would be used in local projects. "P10 million will go a long way in improving our town," he said. *Tina Santos*

Missing wonder 'mami' soup reappears today

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

PETER LEE, premier restaurateur who loves to serve hot, snappy jokes with exquisite specialties, has a surprise for those who all these years have been yearning for a magical but now-gone soup.

We mean here the unforgettable, steaming beef *mami* broth offered in the old Hong Kong Tea House on M.H. del Pilar in Ermita.

One of those who deeply rued the passing of that old haunt is Bert Cuevas, sports editor of Manila Standard and president of the Philippine Sportswriters Association.

Bert, we can swear, had been fueled and powered during his young Daily Express days by that magical brew.

Bert was an ardent devotee who worshipped daily in the old *mami* temple.

He would be seen there every afternoon, wide white spoon in hand, his head fervently bowed, praying before a steaming bowl.

After the delicate ritual, Bert, his forehead bathed in sweat, would rise looking cleansed, refreshed and revived.

He was again all set and fully armed to wrestle with the eternal tyrant we all called The Deadline.

***

It was a tribute to his tenacity that Bert has survived with aplomb after they stopped serving that elixir of his robust life.

Anyway, just like Mr. Cuevas, I roamed around, going to as far as Cubao, Chinatown, Pasay, wondering where I could sip and again taste something that could approximate the missing soup in the old Hong Kong Tea House on M.H. del Pilar.

I was unsuccessful.

Terrific as it has always been, the original Ling Nam on T. Alonso refused to deviate from its tested brew.

Charlie's was itself too proud to shift.

There was a hint of the old magic served in a side street in the Crown Colony years back but it was not as good as the real thing.

Now listen. Peter Lee on Friday announced that my long search will end today.

He vowed to make the long-gone soup appear starting today at the Mr. Peter Lee's Hong Kong Tea House at the corner of Harrison Avenue and Derham Street in Pasay City.

The place will have a soft opening at noon with no less than Pasay City Mayor Peewee Trinidad gracing the occasion.

***

As early as yesterday, Mr. Lee ordered the special ingredients, including juicy shrimp heads, which will be sautéed crispy-dry and gathered in a cloth bag before being dipped overnight in a waiting vat filled with beef bones and native chicken parts.

The rest, gingerly announced Peter, who first worked as waiter/kitchen boy at Ma Mon Luk in 1945, is a trade secret.

But he assured that the wonder soup of Bert Cuevas' young male life will return to steaming life at noon today.

Other than the wonder soup, Peter has prepared something special for Mayor Peewee, his special guest: steamed fish in unique soy sauce. There will also be steamed crab.

Needless to say, the return of the wonder *mami* soup is part of Mr. Lee's gratitude and tribute to the Pasay City mayor.

***

You see, Peter's stomach ulcers started reacting after legal obstacles stalled the scheduled opening of his new restaurant last week.

The mayor was out of town and there was nobody Peter could run to.

He called friends, smoked endlessly, turned and tossed in his sleep.

There indeed were some legal problems.

But the city mayor, upon his return, made some Solomonic remedies to help Peter operate at peace—and possibly in one piece.

Peter also got a special bonus from Mayor Peewee.

He was given a personalized calling card with a handwritten notation saying Peter Lee's establishment will be a credit to the City of Pasay.

Then Peter had no choice. The best he could do, he said, was to re-issue the missing magical soup of Bert Cuevas' young life.

The mayor may not be able to refuse this: Peter hopes to name the comebacking wonder broth after him.

Let's first see Mayor Peewee have a taste of the well-hyped specialty.

If he doesn't swear and call Peter Lee a practical joker, you're all invited to pay the new eating place a visit.

WOW PHILIPPINES

SUMMER TOUR PACKAGES

"Pag maraming turista, masusunod ang pakay ng ating gobyerno. May trabaho, may edukasyon, may tahanan, may pagkain sa bawat mesa."

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President, Republic of the Philippines

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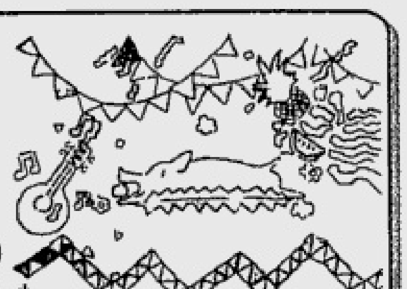
RICHARD J. GORDON
Secretary, Department of Tourism

Fiesta na sa 'min!



BOLIBONG KINGKING FESTIVAL - P3,200.00

3D/2N, (22-24 May, Loboc, Bohol)
Inclusions:
- 3 days, 2 nights at a city hotel or resort
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers
- Full day tour

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3D/2N, (22-24 June, Daet, Camarines Norte)
Inclusions:
- 3 days, 2 nights at Dolor or Canimog Hotel
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3D/2N, (23-25 June, Murcia, Negros Occidental)
Inclusions:
- 3 days, 2 nights at a lodge
- 2 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 2 dinners
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- Tour of Bacolod and Silay Cities
- Entrance fees
- Services of a tour guide and coordinator
- Participation in the body painting ritual
- Participation in the after dinner concert of local bands

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Inclusions:
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- Roundtrip transfers by airconditioned motorcoach
- Tour of Taal town and a visit to the Shrine of Our Lady Mary Mediatrix of all Grace (Lipa City)
- Services of a licensed tour guide
- Souvenir

BANTAYAN-PALAWOD FESTIVAL

3D/2N, (28-29 June, Bantayan Island, Cebu)
Non-aircon room - P1,288.00 *Aircon room - P1,990.00*
Inclusions:
- 3 days, 2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

TACLOBAN PINTADOS FESTIVAL - P3,500.00

3D/2N, (28-30 June, Tacloban City)
Inclusions:
- 3 days, 2 nights at Leyte Park Hotel
- 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners
- Roundtrip airport transfers
- City tour with drinks

Overnight Tayo!

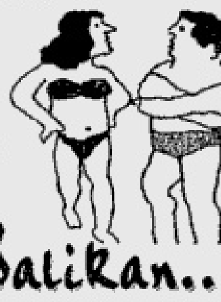
RESORT	WEEKDAY RATE	WEEKEND RATE
Eagle Point (Batangas)	P1,700.00/person	P1,750.00/person
Grand Season Subic	P1,750.00/person	P1,850.00/person
Holiday Inn Clark (Pampanga)	P1,350.00/person	P1,350.00/person
Island Cove (Cavite)	P1,250.00/person	P1,450.00/person
Matabungkay (Batangas)	P1,000.00/person	P1,100.00/person
Montemar (Bataan)	P1,400.00/person	P2,000.00/person
Punta Baluarte (Batangas)	P1,500.00/person	P2,750.00/person

Inclusions:
- Accommodations based on twin sharing
- Set breakfasts

WOW Excursions!

- Bulacan Historical Tour - P1,600.00/person
- Cavite-Batangas Historical Tour -P1,990.00/person
- Caylabne - P1,900.00/person
- Corregidor - P650.00/person
  Overnight: P1,690/person
  (Optional Tour: Light & Sound Show - P150/person)
  (Optional lunch: P450/person)
- Island Cove - P1,350.00/person
- Quezon Province Culinary Tour - P1,600.00/person
- Rizal-Laguna Cottage Industry/Craft Tour - P1,702.00/person
- Villa Escudero - P2,100.00/person

Inclusions:
- Private aircon transport/ferry ride to Corregidor
- Services of a guide or a coordinator
- Set lunch
- Entrance Fees



Kung Balikan...?

LUZON

BAGUIO - P2,808.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at El Cielito Inn
- 2 breakfasts
- City tour

Optional Sights & Activities: Mines View Park, Silver Shop, Burnham Park and local market

Inspiring Baguio - P5,980.00 3D/2N with private transportation

BANAUE - P1,750.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Banaue Hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Viewpoint and Hiwang Tour

Optional Sights & Activities: Banga-an Village, Batad Village, Bontoc & Sagada

Weekend Seat-in-Coach Package (including Transportation) also available:
3D/2N - P4,808.00/person
4D/3N - P6,950.00/person w/Sagada

BICOL

Daet - P1,750.00 3D/2N
Legazpi w/City Tour - P3,504.00 3D/2N
Donsol, Sorsogon - P5,299.00 3D/2N
With Whaleshark Interaction
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip bus terminal transfers

LAOAG

Land Arrangement - P2,850.00 3D/2N
With airfare - P3,690.00 3D/2N
- P4,190.00 4D/3N

Optional tours:
Vigan tour - P750.00
Pagudpud tour - P750.00
Laoag tour - P650.00

Inclusions:
- Accommodations
- Breakfasts

MARINDUQUE - P1,900.00 3D/2N

Sea, Sand & Spa
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers
- Whole day tour with lunch at Gaspar Island, Sulphur Springs and Susana Hot Springs

MINDORO, PUERTO GALERA

Coco Beach - P3,188.00 3D/2N
White Beach
Non aircon room - P2,820.00 3D/2N
Aircon room - P3,850.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel or resort
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airconditioned tourist bus
- Roundtrip ferry service

PALAWAN

Club Paradise (Northern Palawan) - P9,900.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Club Paradise
- Full board meal
- Roundtrip transfers by land & boat from Busuanga
- 1 hour use of sit-in kayak

Club Noah's Ark Floating Inn - P5,450.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Club Noah's Ark Floating Inn
- 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners
- Roundtrip boat transfers
- Complimentary house coffee or tea
- Resort programmed activities
- Use of marine sports and resort facilities
- Services of an activity coordinator

Coron - P6,400.00 3D/2N
Weekend Sailaway (Friday-Monday)
Inclusions:
- Roundtrip passage (2 nights on WG&A and 1 night at Dive Link)
- Full board meal
- On site transfers
- Coron Island tour, Kayangan Lake, Maquinit Hot Springs, Gutob Bay Island Hopping, Kayaking

Dos Palmas - P12,700.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Dos Palmas
- 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners
- Roundtrip airfare via Air Philippines
- Welcome drink, scheduled roundtrip land and boat transfers (city-resort-city)
- Scheduled lunch at nearby picnic sites
- Complimentary coffee or tea
- Speedboat transfer to snorkeling and picnic sites, use of facilities, snorkels, kayaks, fins, jacuzzi

El Nido Miniloc - P11,400.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Garden/family or seaview rooms
- Full board meals
- Airport transfers

Puerto Princesa - P1,800.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: Palawan Museum, Crocodile Farming Institute, city market, War Memorial, Cathedral, St. Paul Subterranean National Park

PAMPANGA - P3,950.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip transfers Manila/Clark/Manila
- Rolling Tour of Angeles City & Clark

Optional Sights & Activities: Mt. Pinatubo Eco Tour

PANGASINAN - P1,650.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at San Fabian Resort or Villa Jireh Resort Hotel
- 2 breakfasts

Optional Sights & Activities: Our Lady of Manaoag, Señor Divino Tesoro Church, Lingayen Gulf Memorial, Hundred Islands, swimming, shopping

SUBIC BAY/OLONGAPO P1,388.00 2D/1N

"Make it this Weekend"
- Subic International Hotel - P1,388.00 2D/1N
- Subic International Hotel - P3,235.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- breakfast(s)
- Roundtrip airconditioned transportation
- Subic Base Tour, Shopping

TUGUEGARAO - P5,000.00 2D/1N

Whitewater Kayaking and Rapelling
Inclusions:
- 2 days/1 night at a hotel
- 1 breakfast, 2 lunches, 1 dinner
- All equipment necessary (kayaks, rafts, helmets, lifevest)
- Travel insurance coverage of P100.000
- Transportation in and around Tuguegarao City

Optional Sights & Activities: Callao & Sierra Caves, Piaacanauan and Chico River Rapids, bat cave, whitewater kayaking, rapelling

VISAYAS

BACOLOD - P1,400.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: City Tour, Silay Heritage Tour

BOHOL

Balicasag Island Dive Resort - P2,850.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Balicasag Island Dive Resort
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip Tagbilaran-Balicasag Island transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: St. Joseph Cathedral, Bohol National Museum, Torralba Market

Bohol with Chocolate Hills - P3,699.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a resort
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers
- Bohol countryside and Chocolate Hills tour with lunch on River Cruise

BORACAY

Red Coconut - P3,200.00 3D/2N
Pink Patio - P3,200.00 3D/2N
Boracay GoldCrown - P3,333.00 3D/2N
Lorenzo Main (aircon) - P3,390.00 3D/2N
Willy's - P4,000.00 3D/2N
Sea Wind - P4,400.00 3D/2N
Waling-Waling - P4,695.00 3D/2N
Boracay Regency - P5,000.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a resort
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: Island hopping and scuba diving

CEBU

Tambuli East - P2,500.00 3D/2N
Maribago - P3,900.00 3D/2N
Waterfront Cebu City - P4,000.00 3D/2N
Bantayan Island
Non aircon room- P1,050.00 3D/2N
Aircon room - P1,958.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel or resort
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

DUMAGUETE - P2,000.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: Dolphin watching in Bais City

ILOILO - P1,200.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Barcelo Sarabia Manor or similar hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: City tour

LEYTE

Enchanted Eastern Visayas
Mac Arthur Park Hotel P1,650.00 3D/2N
Marabut/Sohoton Adventure P3,700.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: Sohoton Cave, Marabut Marine Park, Sto. Nino Shrine and public market

ROXAS CITY - P1,650.00 3D/2N

Sea Food Capital
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Bala Norte Beach Club
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: Ang Panublion, City Plaza, City Hall, Immaculate Concepcion Cathedral, Capitol Bldg., Roxas Display Center, Sta. Monica Church, Panay Bell

MINDANAO

CAGAYAN DE ORO

Lauremar Beach/VIP Hotel -P1,450.00 3D/2N
Southwind/Dynasty -P1,680.00 3D/2N
Malasag Gardens -P2,028.00 3D/2N
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel or resort
- Roundtrip airport transfers
- 2 set breakfasts

Optional Sights & Activities: Whitewater River rafting, Canopy walk, Malasag Gardens, Del Monte Plantation, River Tubing, Camiguin Island Extension, Duka Bay Dive

CAMIGUIN - P5,500.00 3D/2N

Eco-dev & Homestay
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights (1 night homestay /1 night at a resort)
- 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 2 dinners
- Roundtrip transfers either from/to Camiguin airstrip (SEAIR) or from/to Benoni Wharf
- Full day tours including Cultural Interaction, Demo on cassava puto making, tablea chocolate, Nito handicraft, Coconut oil, Corn feeds, and others.
- Island tours - Trek to Tuasan Falls, Sunken cemetery, Church ruins, Stations of the Cross

DAVAO - P2,300.00 3D/2N

Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Barcelo Pearl Farm or Waterfront Insular
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: Aldevinco, Davao Museum, Crocodile Farm, San Pedro Church, public market

SURIGAO - P1,050.00 3D/2N

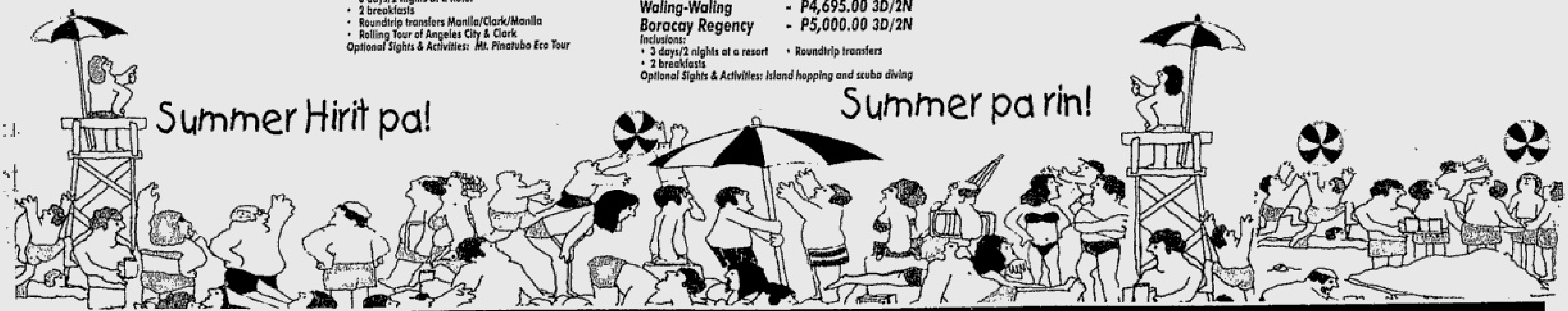
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at Tavern or similar hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip transfers from Surigao Airport or bus terminal

Optional Sights & Activities: Siargao extension, Day-Asan Floating Village, Sagisi Island, Mabua Pebble Beach, Island hopping, Silop Caves

ZAMBOANGA - P1,950.00 3D/2N

City of Flowers
Inclusions:
- 3 days/2 nights at a hotel
- 2 breakfasts
- Roundtrip airport transfers

Optional Sights & Activities: Taluksangay tour, Pasonanca Park, Rio Hondo Village, Fort Pilar, Yakan Weaving Village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Summer pa rin!

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10 FRUIT IS SWELLING

SM CITY CEBU
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5 STAR WARS
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3 RESERVE
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5 (SDDS) SPIDERMAN
6 STAR WARS
7 (DOLBY) STAR WARS
8 PANIC ROOM

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2 PANIC ROOM
3 (DTS) SPIDERMAN
4 SANA TOTOO NA
5 (SDDS) STAR WARS

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2 STAR WARS
3 SANA TOTOO NA

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4 SPIDERMAN
5 SANA TOTOO NA

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'EPISODE II: ATTACK OF THE CLONES'

Also a love story

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

SKYWALKERS' PARENTS. Hayden Christensen as Anakin and Natalie Portman as Padmé Amidala.

I WATCHED the latest Star Wars prequel last Sunday, May 12, for free: I was one of 10 winners of the E! Channel Star Wars art contest (thank the Force!). I gave my other free ticket to a friend who was celebrating his birthday the same day.

Free food, premiere tickets, the "winner" label: It was a good day. But it became even better when the legendary Star Wars "crawl" scrolled up, followed by a surprising, tightly written story and stimulating instant-classic scenes. They totally eradicated my skepticism caused by "Episode I: The Phantom Menace."

Hats off to George Lucas. He finally got his groove back.

"Episode I: The Phantom Menace" of 1999 was the second most successful film in history but it was received with lukewarm enthusiasm, especially by fans of the original trilogy. Anakin Skywalker was the nine-year-old protagonist who didn't exactly inspire admiration from Lucas followers.

Almost everyone went, "That was Darth Vader?" Shudder. It also didn't help that the sweeping computer-generated vistas looked amazing, because there was something amiss. Where was the magic? Even if "Phantom" was visually appealing, it was just clinically cold and hollow.

Complexity

Apparently, Lucas got the drift, and finally delivers with "Attack of the Clones." Jonathan Hales co-wrote the screenplay, which must be a good thing, judging from what I've seen in this movie. There's a layered complexity to the scenes and characters that was missing, I daresay, in most of the previous films.

The Skywalker saga had that appeal of impossibly magnificent battle scenes and memorable power struggles that people can relate to. Against the backdrop of a dictatorship, an ascent to heroism is achieved by the drama of relatives separated by circumstance and reunited by fate.

The original trilogy's romantic angle focused on Leia Organa and Han Solo, with the former kissing her then-unrevealed brother Luke Skywalker to make the latter Hans. It was very awkward and a little brave for one's sensibilities to be tested with that scene.

In the prequel trilogy, the love story focuses on Leia's and Luke's parents, Padmé and Anakin. This time, however, the relationship obviously doesn't have a happy ending, and the hero succumbs to his weaknesses and descends into arch-villainy. This installment has many parallels with "Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back." Many conflicts, events and choices reveal the significance of cycles in this modern mythology (there will be severed body parts, tempting offers, and a lost battle).

Gaps filled

This latest prequel is one of two remaining parts that fill the gaps of Anakin's fall from grace. Playing the 19-year-old Jedi is Hayden Christensen, a Canadian actor who ably conveys the gamut of emotions that the tinderbox character possesses. There is a natural chemistry between him and Padmé (Natalie Portman) that just makes you ache, knowing their believable romance is doomed.

Portman's mature performance is engaging. Charmed by a younger, overconfident man, her character's vulnerability reveals itself. The absence of the funky Queen accent from the previous flick is a plus, as she radiates a more human presence as plain Senator Amidala.

Ewan McGregor as Obi-Wan Kenobi is sublime as usual, but more so in this episode. His character is an angry father figure of sorts to the rebellious Anakin.

The notably invisible character of Jar Jar Binks (Ahmed Best) has mellowed a lot, playing a short but crucial role in the story. Christopher Lee as Count Dukoo is both impressive and dangerous as the Jedi traitor.

Depth

Lucas blesses his otherworldly characters with a more human touch in "Attack." Jango Fett and his son Boba's "bonding" scene (hunting for fleeing Jedi) is unique. Obi-Wan's diner cook-friend acts familiarly human despite his very alien appearance.

Anakin's evolution is gradually and plausibly done so that when he finally snaps, you can't help but cheer and be shocked at same time. Padmé's love for him, even when she knows his dark secret, makes it all the more painful and beautiful.

There is an array of performances and characterizations that gives this installment its much-needed depth.

At the risk of sounding more fanboyish than I already am, I have to say this: All the characters kicked major a**! The way every pivotal character is handled to shine at just about the right time made me gush with childlike awe. There are many surprises that needs to be seen to be believed. Substance overpowers style, but the latter isn't found wanting.

Intelligent

The new designs by Doug Chiang and company look very fresh. The contrast between the antiseptic Clone factory and the grimy Battle Droid factory is clearly apparent. The seedy Coruscant commercial district packs a powerful visual punch.

I envy those artists, as they're encouraged to pull images from their imaginations and the fruits of their labor become toys that every kid (and adult) would want to own. Cool!

The script is quite intelligent, such as in Anakin's and Padmé's talk about politics. Another of many high points is the darkly funny remark of Obi-Wan to Anakin: "You'll be the death of me."

However, in a few key scenes, the viewer can easily predict what some characters will specifically say. Fortunately, there are only a few of that.

There are doses of humor that's laudable and cleverly executed. None of the clumsy Gungan slapstick here.

The action scenes are excellent. There are new breakneck chase scenes, which are ever present in all Star Wars flicks. Some epic battle scenes could've been longer. They leave the viewers begging for more.

Exciting

Episode II made me grin from ear to ear. I never cheered and clapped unabashedly over a movie before. I look forward to Episode III, since "Attack" has again opened the door to expectations. Will we see the death of Padmé? Will we see Gillian Anderson as Mon Mothma? Gabriel Byrne as Grand Moff Tarkin? Will there be clones of all the deceased Sith Lords to decimate the Jedi?

Did Anakin build the Millennium Falcon—as he did C-3PO—as a Jedi vessel? Will we see a young Han Solo or his relatives?

There are a lot of exciting new questions to ponder.

The movie brings back good feelings of déjà vu, nostalgia that made me love Star Wars in the first place. It also makes me a bit sad, knowing where the characters' lives are heading. The ominous foreshadowing makes "Attack of the Clones" a bittersweet experience, as many important subplots connect to the original trilogy.

That night at the Premiere THX theater was a blast, and majority of the audience applauded the return of magic. And young Boba Fett didn't go "Yipee!" like the Vader tyke did in the previous film.

Thank the Force for small favors.

YOUNGEST celebrity endorser Frankie Cuneta-Pangilinan.

Sharon's baby is new TV star

CUTE is an understatement in describing one-year-old Frankie Cuneta-Pangilinan, the youngest celebrity endorser and the new star of the Hi-Nulac TV commercial.

She's got pretty, amazingly round eyes, rosy cheeks, a delightful smile and a remarkably friendly nature.

No wonder she captivated everyone on the set of her very first TV commercial, aptly titled "The Star."

She arrived on the set at around 9:30 a.m. and was ready for take one at 10 a.m. Director Mario Sarmiento was impressed with Frankie's energy and disposition. She never cried once or threw a tantrum and would cheerfully follow the simple instructions from the assistant director.

Only one year and four months old, Frankie is an exceptionally bright kid and has the makings of an actress. She is very much at home with the lights and cameras, every bit a megastar baby.

During the TV commercial shoot, she came with mom Sharon and Lola Elaine. The two-day shoot was a breeze and, as luck would have it, was quite productive with lots of good footage.

The result is an endearing Hi-Nulac TV commercial filled with amazing moments and antics from a bright, new star.

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32 years later, Rudy F is playing in his 101st film

AFTER failing in his first political bid when he ran for mayor in Quezon City in last year's elections, action star **Rudy Fernandez** has decided to focus on his show biz career.

"It's back to the movies for me," says Rudy. "Last year, I didn't make any movie because I campaigned in the election. But this time, I want to concentrate on show biz. I don't have any political plans."

He also has his weekly TV show, the crime-drama series, "Kasangga" on GMA 7.

"It's pure show biz for me at this point," Rudy says.

He headlines the action picture "Diskarte," an official entry in the revived Manila Film Festival next month.

He used to be choosy and made only one film a year. Now Rudy is scouting for material for another movie that can be entered in the Metro Manila Film Festival in December.

"I want to be busier in films this year," he says. "I've been offered several projects but I always ask for the script and study it first. If the material is good, then it's worth my time and effort.

"I only want the best for the moviegoers," he adds.

In "Diskarte," he is reunited with director **Boy Viñarao** who first worked with him in "Birador," which won awards from the Film Academy of the Philippines for best picture, best director, best actor, best screenplay for **Senen Dimaguila**, best editing for Viñarao and best cinematography for **Juanito Pereira**.

Dimaguila collaborated with **Meek Roxas** on the script of "Diskarte," for Maverick Films. Rudy knew he was in good company.

He is also back together again with **Ara Mina**, with whom he first paired in the action-drama, "Palaban." In their second outing, the action star and the sexy actress are bolder, not only in the love scenes but also in terms of their roles, the theme and the execution.

Rudy plays an ex-marine just out of jail, where he served time for killing drug pushers and addicts who murdered his wife. Now he vows to hunt anyone involved in drugs.

Ara Mina plays an exotic dancer who falls in love with Rudy and sticks with him through good and bad times.

Rudy is likely to earn a best actor nomination in the Manila Film Festival for "Diskarte." He will be up against **Christopher de Leon**, who stars with **Sharon Cuneta** and **Judy Ann Santos** in Viva Films' "Magkapatid."

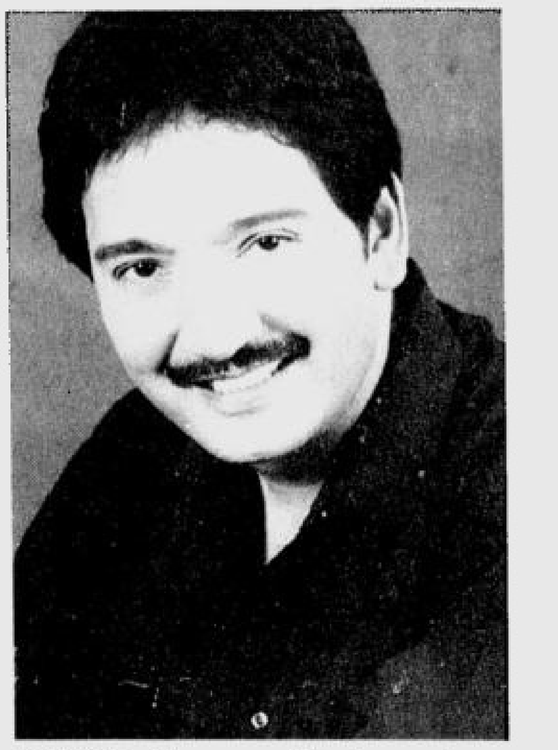
"I don't think of awards," Rudy says. "I know that they're important but they shouldn't be the focus when you want to have a quality movie."

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Leah Salterio

Rudy filmed "Diskarte" for two months, with a total of 26 shooting days. It is the 101th entry in his filmography, which is stored in his laptop computer. The information on each entry includes the producer and the movie's playdate.

"I even remember my dialogue in most of my movies," he boasts. "I have a very good memory. One look at the title and I remember all my costars and even the name of my character in the movie. I've been making movies for the past 32 years."



FOCUSED. No more politics for now for Rudy.

Incidentally, 101 is also Rudy's car plate number.

Nominated

CONGRATULATIONS to my former classmate, lawyer **Jun Quicho**, who hosts the daily afternoon radio show, "Pitlag: Kuwento ng Buhay, Isyu ng Bayan," on RMN (Radio Mindanao Network). The program is a finalist in the best regularly scheduled drama category in this year's New York Festivals (Radio Programming and Promotions Competition).

The nominated episode was "Giyera sa Dibdib ni Nana Dolor," translated as "The War-Torn Heart of *Nana* Dolor." The drama about the armed conflict in Mindanao was produced by **Tet Maceda** for Pathways Productions, written by **Gil Mendoza** and jointly directed by **Eli Guieb** and **Fredo Lazarte**.

Jun told me there are over a thousand entries from 35 countries. The awarding ceremony is on June 20 in New York.

"Pitlag" airs daily, 4 to 4:30 p.m. on RMN.

New company

STARMAKER and record producer **Lou Pearlman**, the man responsible for the popularity of top bands like N'Sync, Backstreet Boys and O-Town, has launched Trans Continental Records Manila Inc. (TCRM), an entertainment company.

Pearlman serves as chair of the board. The president is Filipino businessman and industrialist Antonio M. Garcia.

The members of the board of directors include **Joseph Chow, David DeCamillis, Tom Hynes** and **Deeda Garcia-Versoza**.

Trans Continental aims to promote an exchange of talent between east and west. Pearlman wants to see his boy bands and other talents make it big in the Asian market. He also wants to bring Asian talents, particularly Filipino, to the west.

TCRM's first project was promoting Pearlman's latest discovery, Natural. Last January, the five-member band did a string of promo concerts in several malls around Metro Manila. Their debut single, "Put Your Arms Around Me," hit No. 1 in some of Manila's radio stations.

TCRM has other projects lined up for the rest of the year.

MTV honors best RP music video

FOR the second year in a row, MTV Philippines honors the best in music video-making in the Philippines with MTV Pilipinas 2002, June 6 at the NBC Tent in Fort Bonifacio Global City.

The event is known to be the biggest night for Philippine music video-making, with 18 nominees in eight categories.

Nominees for MTV Pilipinas 2002 are:

New artist: Karylle for "Can't Live Without You;" Gabby Eigenmann for "Loving;" Monsterbot for "Explosive;" Gloc 9 for "Isang Araw;" Jennifer Cuneta for "Chip On My Shoulder."

Group: Wolfgang for "Meckam;" Rivermaya for "Umaaraw, Umuulan;" Barbie's Cradle for "Money for Food;" True Faith for "Sumarap Ang Gising;" Cheese for "Mottaka."

Male artist: Gary Valenciano featuring Kyla for "Can We Just Stop and Talk A While;" Janno Gibbs featuring Pilita Corrales for "Kapantay ay Langit;" Janno Gibbs featuring Pops Fernandez for "Say A Little Prayer;" Martin Nievera for "Imagine Me Without You;" Gabby Eigenmann for "Loving."

Female artist: Karylle for "Can't Live Without You;" Regine Velasquez for "To Reach You;" Sharon Cuneta for "Where's the Good In Good-bye?;" Kyla for "I Feel For You;" Jaya for "Love Hurts."

Song: Barbie's Cradle for "Money For Food;" Regine Velasquez for "To Reach You;" Parokya ni Edgar for "Swimming Beach;" Kyla for "I Feel For You;" Rivermaya for "Umaaraw, Umuulan."

Voters may cast their vote for their most favorite artist through ballots available at Music One, Tower Records, Odyssey, TGI Friday's, Outback Restaurant, Italianni's Restaurant, Tequila Joe's, California Pizza Kitchen, National Sports Grill, MTV Style Outlets, Jag stores and Dolce & Gabbana counters in leading department stores.

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GLORIETTA 4 cinema 3 (guaranteed seat) [illegible]
GLORIETTA 4 cinema 6 - 11:40 / 2:30 / 5:20 / 8:10 / 11:00
GREENBELT 1 cinema 2 - 11:10 / 1:55 / 4:40 / 7:25 / 10:10
GLORIETTA 1(QUAD) cinema 1 - 10:40 / 1:30 / 4:20 / 7:10 / 10:00
GLORIETTA 3(QUAD) cinema 3 - 12:50 / 3:40 / 6:30 / 9:20
ALABANG TOWN CENTER 1 (THX) - 11:50 / 2:30 / 5:10 / 7:50/10:30
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STAR WARS EPISODE II ATTACK OF THE CLONES

CCP pays tribute to Lino Brocka

THE CULTURAL Center of the Philippines pays tribute to the late Lino Brocka, National Artist for Film and one of Asia's noted directors in "The Lino Brocka Legacy," on the occasion of his 11th death anniversary on May 22.

The best-known and most highly regarded contemporary Philippine filmmaker, Brocka broke grounds for Philippine cinema internationally when his films "Insiang" (1976), "Jaguar" (1979) and "Bona" (1980) were shown at Cannes Film Festival, both in the director's fortnight and the main competition. He had a colorful career until his death in a car accident in 1991.

Brócka was a controversial public figure during the repressive Martial Law years—often at the forefront of social and political causes such as the anti-censorship and human rights movements—and a prolific filmmaker as well, with over 70 films to his name.

The CCP tribute to Brocka will be held at the Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino (Little Theater) Lobby where a Mass will begin the activities at 5:30 p.m., followed by a short program and the opening of an exhibit of the director's film posters, books, trophies and filmography.

As part of the exhibit, two videos will be shown: "Lino Brocka, Artist for All Season," a 30-minute documentary directed by Rowena Concepcion on Brocka's beginnings in theater, life, works and contributions to Philippine Cinema and "Signed: Lino Brocka, " directed by Christian Blackwood, a 90-minute documentary portraying the late Filipino filmmaker as patriot and socialist.

The event, while paying tribute to Brocka, also hopes to raise support for film archiving—the retrieval, reprinting and preservation of important Filipino films, especially the works of the National Artists for Film.

A screening of the acclaimed Brocka masterpiece, "Maynila: sa Kuko ng Liwanag," will be the evening's highlight at 8 p.m.

Scripted by Clodualdo del Mundo based on the novel by Edgardo M. Reyes serialized in Liwayway Magazine, "Maynila: sa Kuko ng Liwanag" is the story of a young man Julio Madiaga (Bembol Roco) who arrives in Manila from the province to seek out his childhood sweetheart Ligaya Paraiso (Hilda Koronel). In the city, he plunges into the depths of poverty, exploitation and finally is corrupted and consumed by it.

"Maynila sa Kuko ng Liwanag" was recently chosen as one of the 150 masterpieces of world cinema in the new book "Film: The Critics' Choice," edited by Geoff Andrew with a foreword by Bernardo Bertolucci. It is published by Ivy Press.

For more information on "The Lino Brocka Legacy," call the CCP Film Division at 832-1125 local 1704-05 or 832-5120.

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

ARANETA CENTER THEATERS 911-3101	
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-1	VIDEOKE KING
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-2	SANA TOTOO NA
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-3 (DDS)	STAR WARS
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	SPIDERMAN
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-5 (DTS)	STAR WARS
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-6 (DOLBY)	FRUIT IS SWELLING
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-7(DOLBY)	JASON-X
FARMERS PLAZA-1(DOLBY)	SPIDERMAN
FARMERS PLAZA-2(DOLBY)	STAR WARS
FIESTA CARNIVAL	
NEW FRONTIER	
MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	EVA / JOYRIDE
ODEON	STAR WARS
ODEON-2	FRUIT IS SWELLING
ROBEN	SANA TOTOO NA
TANDEM-1	ITLOG
TANDEM-2	IKA-7 GLORYA
TIMES	FROM HELL / D 'TOX
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	CLOSED
ACT-4	CLOSED
CORONET-2	ORIGINAL SIN
QUEZON-1	SANA TOTOO NA
REMAR	STAR WARS
REMAR-2	SANA TOTOO NA
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	SANA TOTOO NA
B	KAPIRASONG GUBAT . . .
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	
CINEMA-2	STAR WARS EPISODE 2
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	SANA TOTOO NA
CINEMA-2	BUKANG BIBIG
CINEMA-3	K-PAX
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	STAR WARS
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	SPIDERMAN
CINEMA-6	JASON-X
CINEMA-7	VIDEOKE KING
CINEMA-8	SCORPION KING
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	STAR WARS
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	STAR WARS
CINEMA-11(SDDS)	STAR WARS
CINEMA-12	SPIDERMAN
CINEMA-14	SPIDERMAN
CINEMA-15	SPIDERMAN
LORES	
CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-3	CLOSED
POWER PLANT CINEMA	
CINEMA-1	PANIC ROOM
CINEMA-2	STAR WARS: EPISODE 2
CINEMA-3	STAR WARS: EPISODE 2
CINEMA-4	STAR WARS: EPISODE 2
CINEMA-5	SPIDERMAN
CINEMA-6	STAR WARS: EPISODE 2
UNIWIDE METROMALL	
(LAS PIÑAS)	
CINEMA-1	
CINEMA-2	
CINEMA-4	
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	
CINEMA-1	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
CINEMA-2	THE OTHER SIDE OF LOVE
CINEMA-4	ALAMID

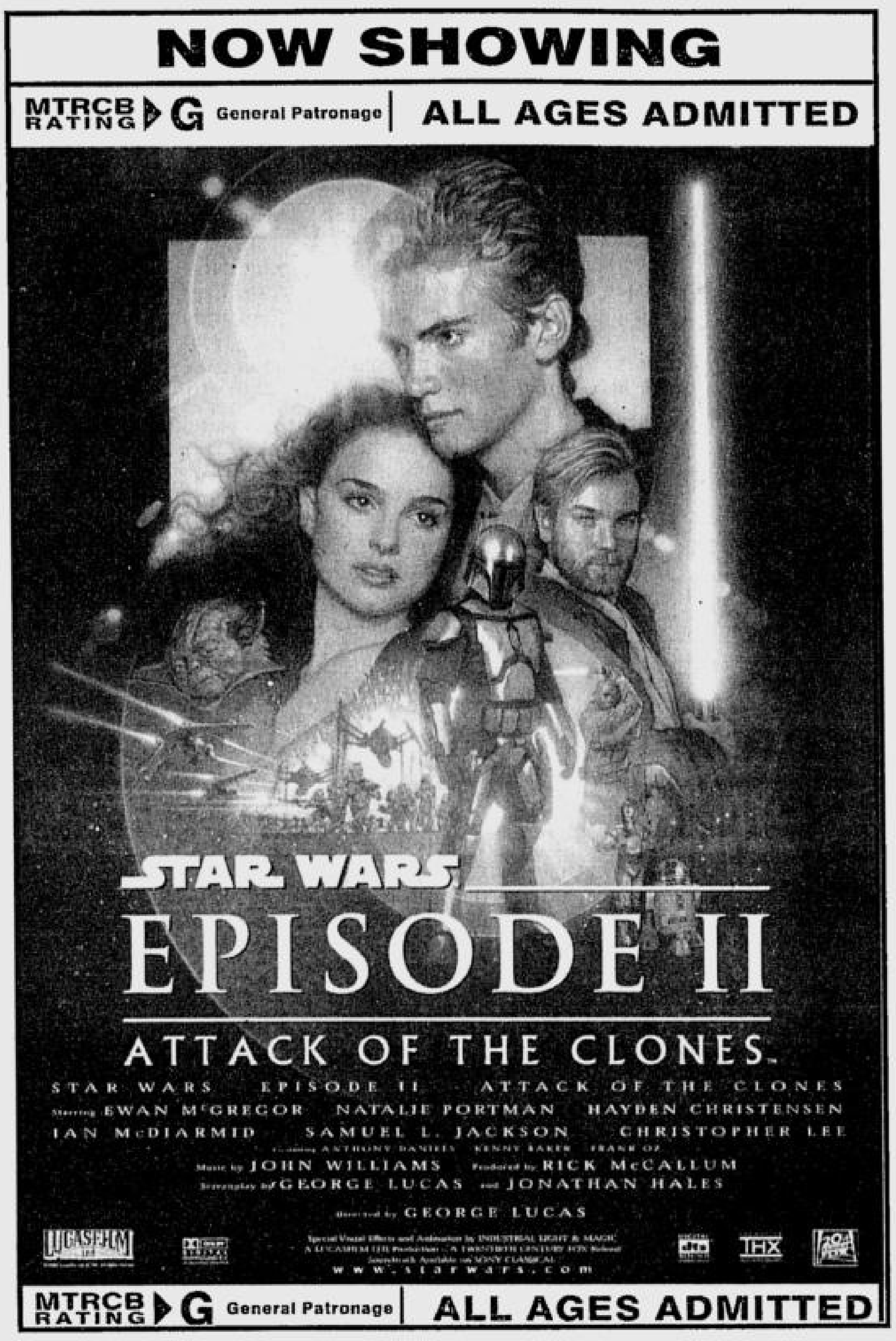
Regine at Ratsky

VELASQUEZ

AFTER her series of bar tours for Ratsky in Malate and Cebu, Regine Velasquez will perform at Ratsky Tomas Morato on May 30.

The show caps the series which is also a promo for Regine's latest album, "Reigne," under Viva Records.

For inquiries, call 373-9882 to 84.



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Directed by GEORGE LUCAS

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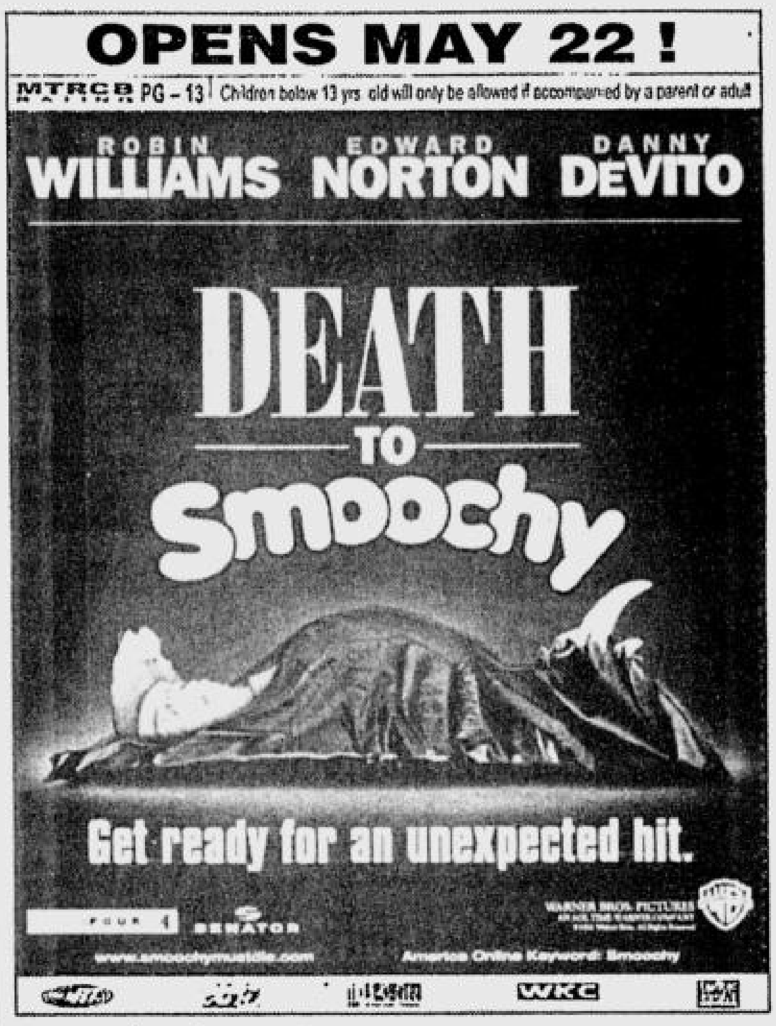

OPENS MAY 22 !

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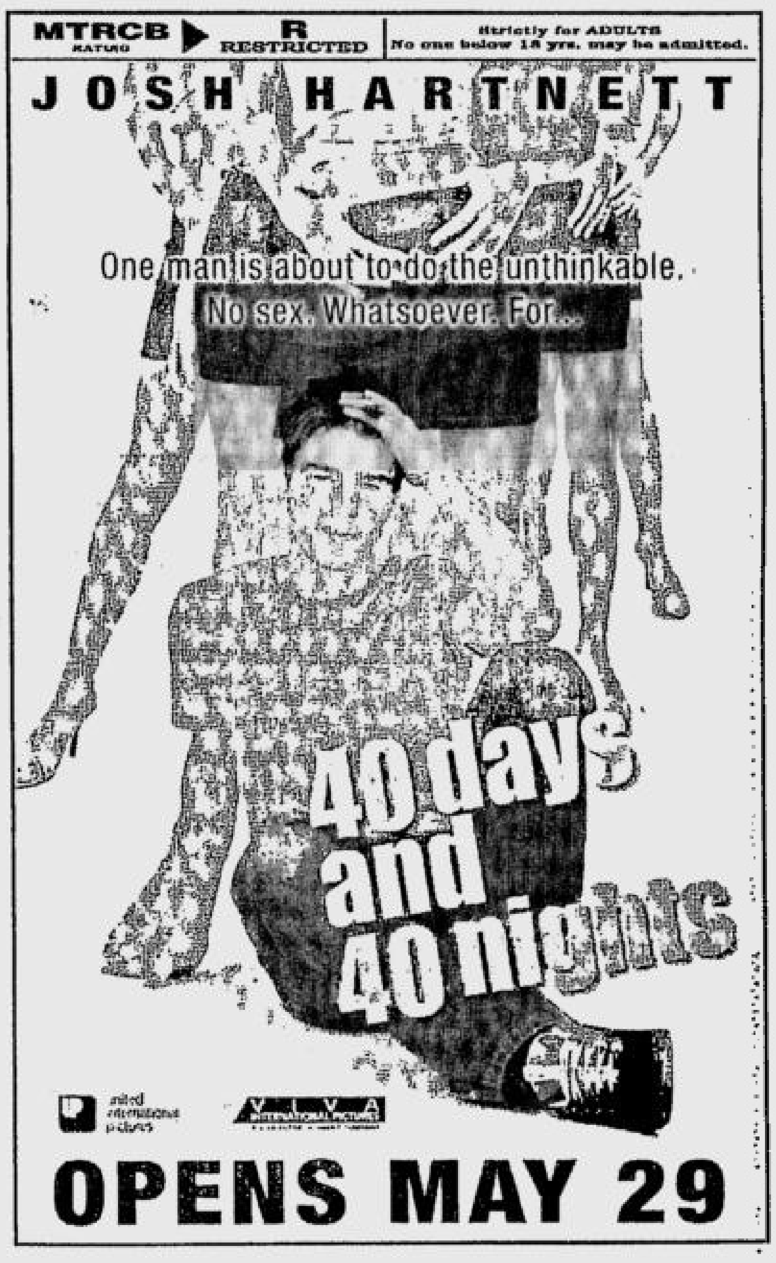

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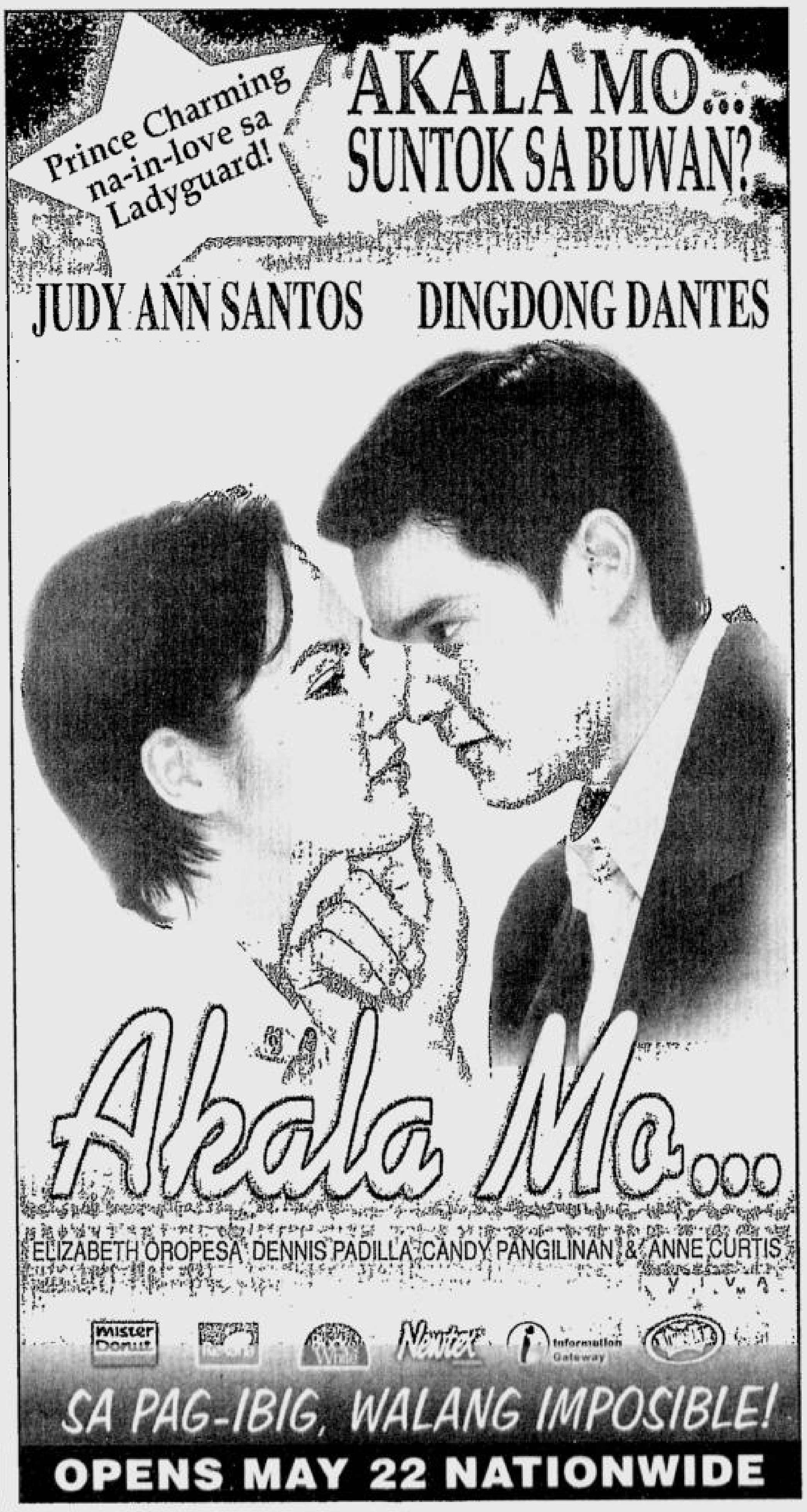

Prince Charming na-in-love sa Ladyguard!

AKALA MO... SUNTOK SA BUWAN?

JUDY ANN SANTOS DINGDONG DANTES

Akala Mo...

ELIZABETH OROPESA DENNIS PADILLA CANDY PANGILINAN & ANNE CURTIS

VIVA

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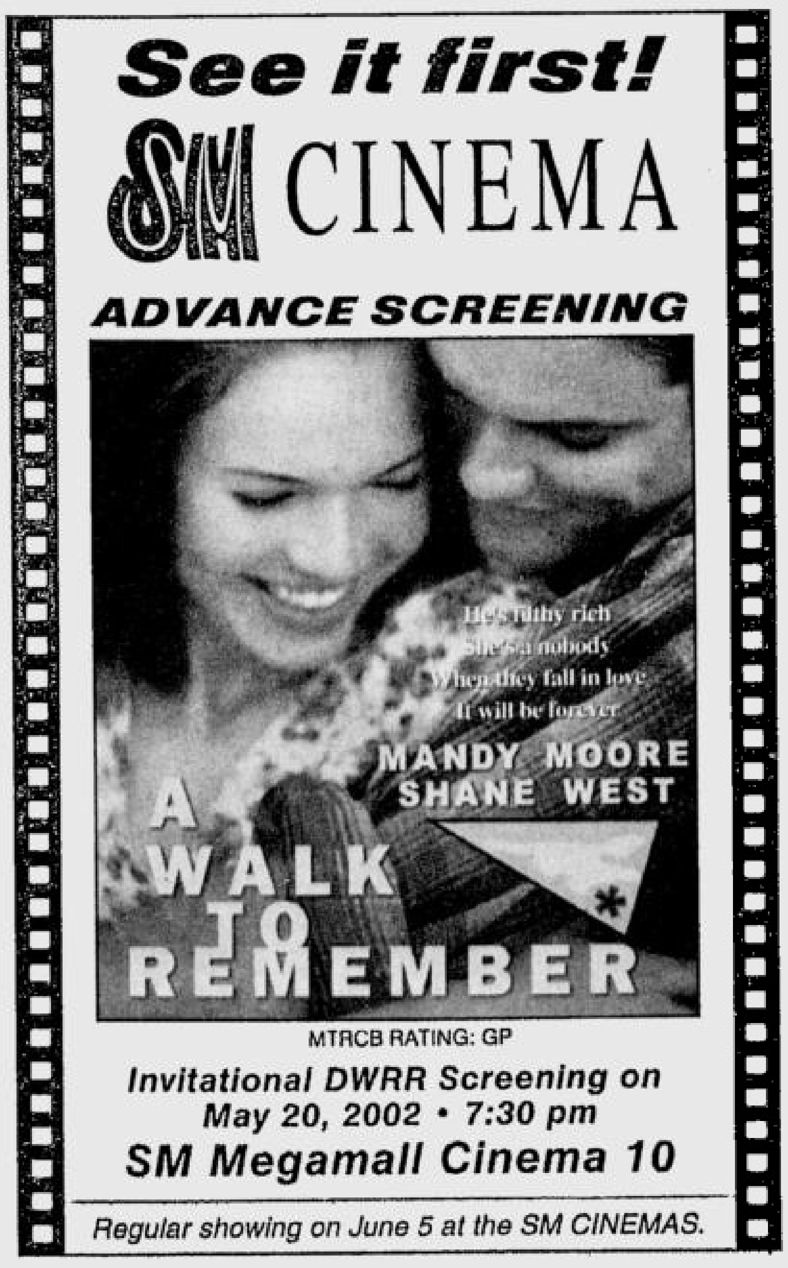
OPENS MAY 22 NATIONWIDE



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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Louie C. Camino**

Skin-to-skin close and wet with Troy Montero

KRIS AND TELL

Kris Aquino

I'M writing this column immediately after a challenging pictorial with my favorite photographer, **Jun de Leon**.

Jun is the only one who can make me feel gorgeous while I am submerged shoulder-deep in the Traders Hotel swimming pool, while my face is toward the setting sun, and while I'm making very sure that the Swatch Bijoux necklace I have on is getting prominent and flattering exposure.

Modeling is a truly demanding field, and I regret the times I didn't give fashion layouts their due appreciation. The painstaking work that goes into making spreads eye-catching and original took its toll: I'm now nursing a fever.

My fault, though. I hosted Greenbelt 3's THX Cinemas and Food Choices opening last Thursday. My friend and doctor, Dr. **Aye Nuguid**, kindly did a "hotel room" call since I was being made up at the New World and my coughing was getting progressively worse. Lucky for me, he was getting out of Makati Medical Center and was on his way to the gym.

Vain me

I was hoarse and I knew that if I didn't get myself checked, it might lead to something more serious, which my schedule just wouldn't allow. Aye checked my throat which was inflamed, and my breathing which was labored, and he diagnosed right away that I was battling a respiratory infection which required antibiotics.

I knew that the worst thing I could do was submerge myself in a swimming pool at dusk, but then again someone as vain as me would gladly make sacrifices, especially if Jun de Leon photography was involved.

(Briefly, now: Greenbelt 2 and 3 are very impressive. The lagoon and walkway around the mini park remind me of the landscaping and the architecturally inspired use of bodies of water around the Disney World complex in Orlando, Florida. My mom and I took a vacation there, just the two of us, after my college graduation and we stayed in the lush Grand Floridian, which echoes the combined urban and refreshingly tropical feel of Greenbelt's lagoon area.)

Lucky me

Back to the pictorial. I couldn't really complain because I know that so many women of all ages, and gays for that matter, would gladly have traded places with me. **Troy Montero** was my partner during the pictorial!

We actually had only one shot together, but it was very difficult to mount. Our faces were draped with many different dangling Swatches, but we had to be connected in such a way as to appear like two pieces in a jigsaw puzzle.

My right cheekbone had to fit into the hollow below Troy's cheekbone, and we had to look like we were in peaceful, while at the same time sensual, slumber. For us to connect that way, you can just imagine how closely bound our bodies had to be. I had to wear a black tube top and Troy was shirtless to give the illusion of bare skin.

It sure made me wish I'd been hitting the gym to tone my shoulders and arms. I had to wrap my right arm around his waist so that we'd squeeze into the frame and believe me, Troy doesn't have any unwanted fat on his body. Wow, his abdominals are firm, no love handles at all, and his chest and shoulders are well defined without being threateningly huge!

Troy, since returning to Manila from an extended US vacation, has been working out religiously, and it's amazing to see and feel what he's been able to achieve in just five months.

Perfect business

During our dinner break, Troy mentioned that he's one of the partners in a new live music venue in Libis that he and his friends will be opening next month. His partners are friends from entertainment and some non-show biz buddies.

I'm not sure if I'm allowed to mention who his other partners are, but all of them are definite lookers and I think they'll have the same success currently enjoyed by Dish, with the same sex appeal quotient as the US bars owned by **Cindy Crawford**'s husband **Rande Gerber**.

It's a perfect business for them because they do like and know how to party. I'm so sure their place will be a bit hit, overflowing with all the girls in the city eager to be personally welcomed and entertained by the owners.

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Jackie Chan to get stunt award

LOS ANGELES—Hong Kong action film tough guy Jackie Chan has been tapped to win a special award for his contribution to movie stunts, organizers said.

Hong Kong star Chan, who has made Hollywood hits such as "Rush Hour II" and "Shanghai Noon," will be one of three stunt experts to be honored next week at the second annual World Stunt Awards in Los Angeles.

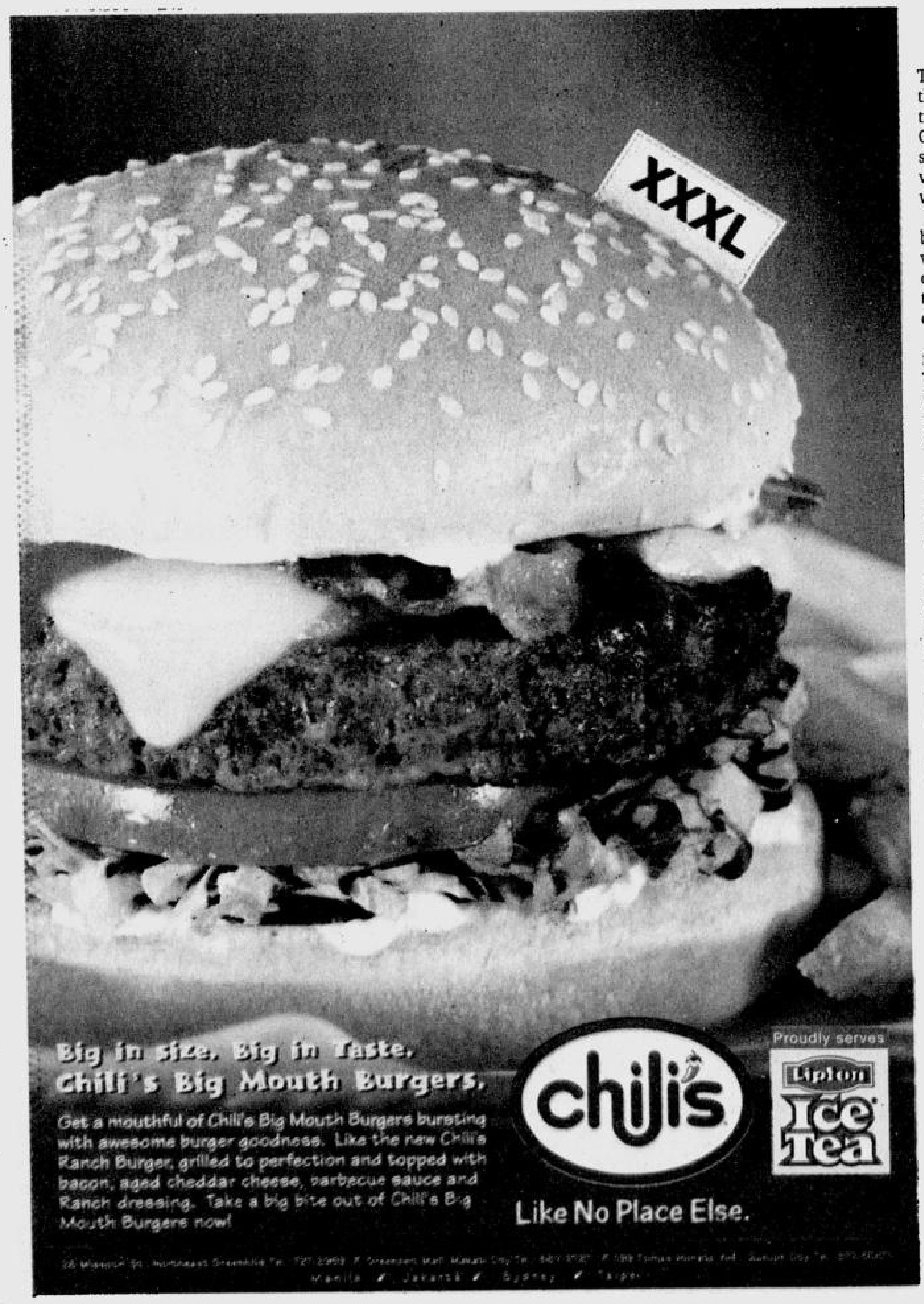
"As an actor and martial artist, receiving an honorary lifetime achievement as an actor in action films at the World Stunt Awards is like receiving an Academy Award," 48-year-old Chan said. "I am very proud and very grateful."

Chan will accept the 2002 Taurus Honorary Achievement Award for acting in action films on Sunday through a live satellite link to Prague where he is shooting his new picture, "Shanghai Knights."

Also receiving the award for their contributions to action films and their support of stuntmen will be film director Michael Bay, who made "Pearl Harbor" and "The Rock" and stuntman Buddy Van Horn.

The first such honor went to Austrian-born action hero Arnold Schwarzenegger last year. The 1,000 members of the World Stunt Academy vote for the winners of the awards. Presenters this year will include stars such as Charlton Heston, Dennis Hopper, Billy Bob Thornton, Matthew McConaughey, Lucy Liu, Kelly Hu and British comic John Cleese, organizers said.

AP



Get a mouthful of Chili's Big Mouth Burgers bursting with awesome burger goodness. Like the new Chili's Ranch Burger, grilled to perfection and topped with bacon, aged cheddar cheese, barbecue sauce and Ranch dressing. Take a big bite out of Chili's Big Mouth Burgers now!

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Thespic event

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

TWO Tuesdays ago, we made it a point to catch the telecast of "ER" because that episode featured **Lea Salonga** in a guest role. This is the Christmas-season appearance that was built up so much months ago—but it turns out that it was more of a cameo role than anything else, with Lea appearing in only a few sequences.

She played a young Asian-American who brought a young relative to the hospital, along with what looked like their entire clan. This is, of course, an Asian custom that is no big deal in these parts, but the US drama show made a big deal of it.

While at the hospital, Lea's character fainted, so the doctors examined her as well. They discovered that she herself had a life-threatening illness. But this "revelation" was no big deal to her, because she already knew that she had a lymphoma.

The appearance was rather brief, but to Lea's credit, she acquitted herself well, neither underacting (as is her habit) nor overacting, just doing precisely what her scenes called for, with insight and feeling.

Too bad, her character wasn't really given enough time to peak. That was because that particular episode's focus was on the doctor character played by series regular **Eric La Salle**, who was leaving the show for good that week, after having been in it for years.

La Salle's character went out with an emotional bang, because he was leaving the hospital in order to have more time to spend with his young son.

The emotional conflict involved tested La Salle's character to the limit. It wasn't easy for him to leave the hospital that he had come to love so well, but his love for his son proved to be stronger. As La Salle's character wrestled with this choice, the actor was able to show his performing range, and his departure from the series was a thespic event.

Movies on Cinemax

FRIDAY, May 24 at 9:30 a.m., "I Like It Like That." 11:15 a.m., "Millennium Man." 2:15 p.m., "Psycho." 1:35 a.m., "Rosemary's Baby."

Saturday, May 25 at 7:45 a.m., "Suspect." 1:30 p.m., "The Screaming Room: The 10 Scariest Films Ever Made, Part 2." 2 p.m., "The Phantom of the Opera." 12:20 a.m., "American History X."

Sunday, May 26 at 1:50 a.m., "Scarface."

Monday, May 27 at 3:45 p.m., "The Secret Garden." 9 p.m., "Coming to America."

Tuesday, May 28 at 8:15 a.m., "The Other Woman." 11:15 a.m., "Sorry, Wrong Number." 4 p.m., "Bell, Book and Candle." 5:45 p.m., "James Dean."

Wednesday, May 29 at 6:30 a.m., "The Master of Ballant-rae." 2 p.m., "Running on Empty."

Thursday, May 30 at 3:45 p.m., "Time After Time."

Friday, May 31 at 10 a.m., "Scarface." 5:30 a.m., "Celebrity Profile: Goldie Hawn."

Bong, baring and daring

TIME was when action stars refused to strip for bed scenes. They felt that, since their audience was primarily male, their fans were more interested in their female partners' bodies than anything else. So, action stars made it a point to keep their pants on during bed scenes.

In his new film with **Assunta de Rossi**, however, **Bong Revilla** is reported to be baring his behind. In fact, this is being cited as one of the selling points of the film.

Is the move merited? Some people observe that women have started to watch action movies, so they would be interested in seeing Bong doing something sexy. Others, however, feel that this goes against what male aficionados of action films want, and could turn them off.

A third viewpoint is that Bong is rather chunky these days, so stripping may not be all that advisable for him. Well, once the Bong-Assunta starrer is shown this month, we'll know the viewers' verdict as far as this "to strip, or not to strip" question is concerned.

Incidentally, some big action heroes have bared their behinds on the big screen in the past, but only for comic effect. Let's hope that viewers don't find Bong's baring and daring gambit similarly amusing.

'Scooby-Doo' on the big screen

SCOOBY-Doo, the ultimate crimefighting dog, stars in his first feature film. The self-titled comedy-adventure also topbills **Freddie Prinze, Jr.**, **Sarah Michel-le Gellar** and **Rowan Atkinson**.

The film by **Raja Gosnell** catches up with Scooby-Doo and the Mystery Inc. gang as they meddle their way into a real mystery that leads them into murky and possibly supernatural waters at the Spooky Island resort. They investigate a series of paranormal incidents that threatens to drive tourists away from the "frightfully popular" resort.

Although this is Scooby-Doo's first feature film, he has been on TV since 1969. Continued syndication and countless video episodes have made him the star of the longest continuously running cartoon series in TV history.

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SSS seen running out of funds in 10 years

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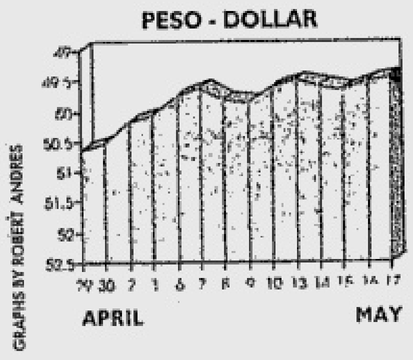


PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 49.460 = $1
As of 5 p.m., May 17, 2002

¥ 127.34 = $1
As of 5 p.m., May 17, 2002

GOLD: $310/310.50
per ounce Hong Kong,
May 17, 2002

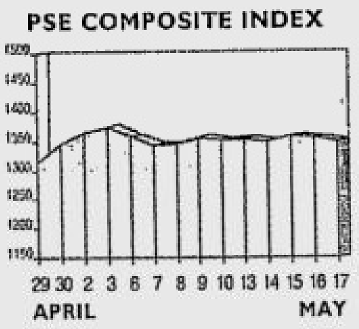
STOCK MARKET

Shares down 0.5%

SHARES closed slightly down Friday on lingering concerns over the government's fiscal position, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index declined 6.11 points, or 0.5 percent, to 1349.63 after losing 1.92 points Thursday to 1355.74.

The broader All Shares Index rose 1.12 points to 752.49 following a 6.55-point loss Thursday to 751.37.



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Joanne Miguel, analyst at 2TradeAsia.com, said investors continued to shave holdings on concerns over the government's ability to meet its budget deficit target after overshooting its goal in the first quarter.

The government's budget deficit hit P61.2 billion in the first quarter, off its target of P52.9 billion due to poor tax collection, a weak economy and low interest rates.

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE SOCIAL Security System may run out of funds to pay for its members' claims by 2012, three years earlier than projected in 1999, SSS president Corazon de la Paz told the INQUIRER on Friday.

In its 1999 "actuarial" study, the SSS estimated that its funds would last only up to 2015.

"However, we are coming up with a new actuarial study, and I fear that this study will reveal that the actuarial life of the SSS will last only up to 2012, or even earlier, especially if the economy will not recover immediately," De la Paz said.

In a presentation to the INQUIRER staff, SSS officials said the state pension fund should be allowed as soon as possible to gradually raise its members' contributions or reduce its members' benefits.

Otherwise, they warned, SSS would soon become insolvent and would be unable to pay claims of its 23 million members working in the private sector.

"If we carry on at this pace, wherein the benefits paid are far greater than the contributions collected, the fund will last only until 2012 or even earlier," De la Paz said.

From P181 billion last year, the SSS' funds are now down to only about P165 billion, as it had to put up huge provisions for possible loses from its real estate investments and loans.

In 1990, the fund's life was estimated to "last to perpetuity." In 1995, the valuation was revised, with the SSS' actuarial life seen reaching 2050.

In 1999, however, with claims rising faster than contributions, the SSS was given until 2015.

De la Paz said the SSS had brought up to the Cabinet and to President Macapagal-Arroyo the idea of gradually increasing the rate of its members' contributions.

She said the SSS had already started holding talks with labor and employers groups about the need to raise the members' contributions.

DELA PAZ
JOAN BONDOC

A law is no longer required to raise the contributions of SSS members, but such a move will need the President's signature.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has reportedly instructed SSS officials to hold consultations to convince key sectors to agree to higher contributions from SSS members.

The SSS has one of the lowest rates of monthly contributions among pension funds in Asia.

The monthly contributions of SSS members are much lower than the contributions of the 1.5 million members of the Government Service Insurance System, which amount to 21 percent of their salaries.

Malaysians contribute 23 percent of their monthly salaries to their pension fund, while contributions in China and Singapore are set at 20 percent and 32 percent, respectively.

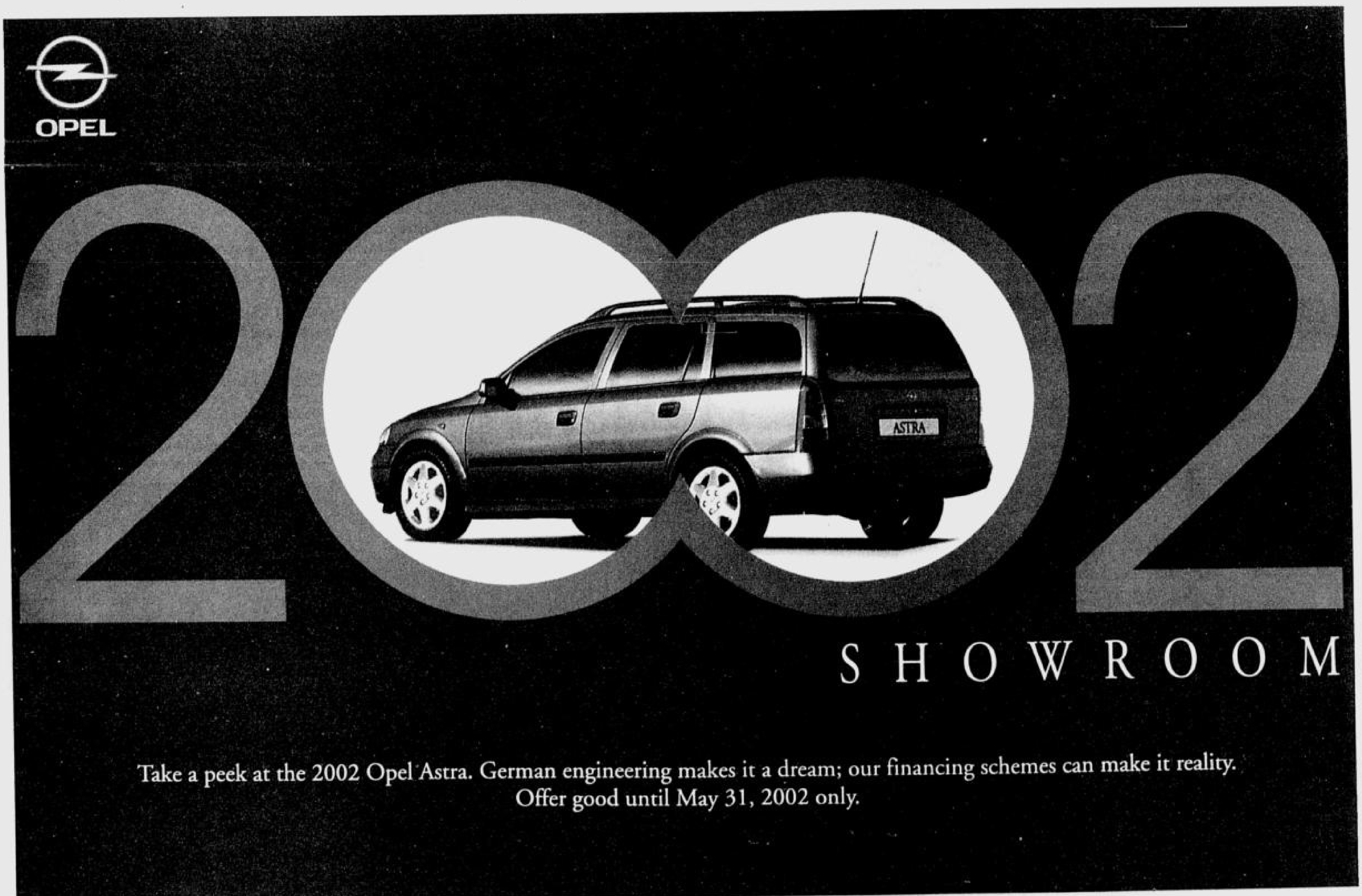
The SSS said the rate of its members' monthly contributions must be increased from the current level of 8.4 percent to 22 percent, with certain improvements in the benefits, to add at least 65 more years to the fund's life.

Without enhancements in the members' benefits, the contributions must be raised to only 16 percent. The adjustment, however, can be done gradually, according to SSS officials.

Of the 8.4 percent in contribution, the employer pays 5.04 percent while the members pay the remaining 3.36 percent. Those earning between P1,000 and P15,000 a month are qualified to become SSS members.

"We are aware that it will be

SSS/ B8



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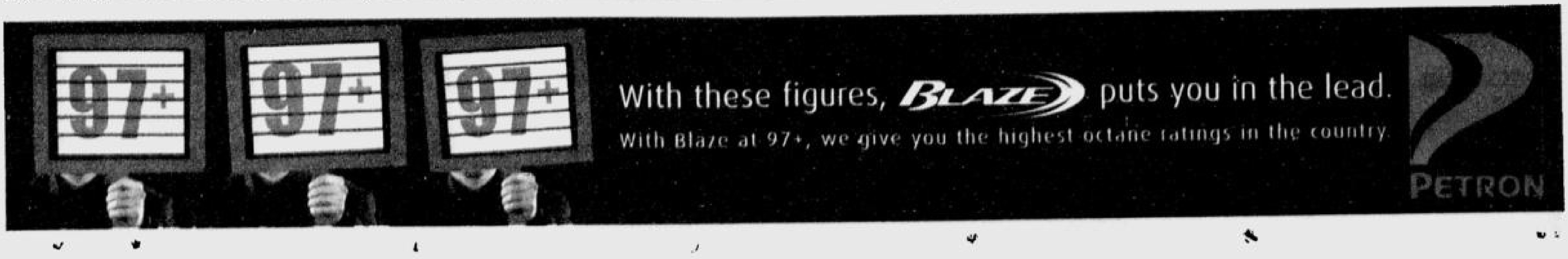

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Gov't scraps tariffs on certain fertilizer grades

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE GOVERNMENT has removed the tariffs on imported fertilizer grades that are not produced locally.

The Cabinet-level committee on Tariff and Related Matters has granted the petition of the Fertilizer Industry Association of the Philippines to scrap the tariffs on certain imported fertilizer grades in view of the difficulties facing the industry today.

FIAP president Raul V. Aristorenas said the lifting of the tariffs would translate into savings of about P10 per bag of certain fertilizer grades, including urea and the so-called 46-0-0 grade.

He said that raw materials used for fertilizer grades sold locally were 60 to 65 percent imported. Due to its dependence on imported fertilizer grades and fertilizer raw materials, the peso depreciation and the erratic changes in the world market prices made the situation difficult for the local fertilizer industry.

Aristorenas said the move would not affect the fertilizer grades being produced by the recently privatized Philippine Phosphate and Fertilizer Corp.

"Philphos produces the NPK (nitrogen-phosphorus-potash) and the 1620 grades. Since it was privatized, it had also started to import other fertilizer grades such as urea," explained Aristorenas, who also heads Bulk Commodities and Chemicals Corp.

Aristorenas said the privatization of Philphos has affected the sector since it was now competing directly with other fertilizer companies. "But that is beneficial to all industry players."

The privatization leveled the playing field among fertilizer companies as Philphos could no longer artificially lower its prices below market levels, which in the past distorted the local prices and the market.

The fertilizer industry plans to consolidate its raw material importation and invest in small-blending facilities to boost the industry's total earnings, which has been limited to less than P10 billion a year for the past 12 years.

Member-companies of the Fertilizer Industry Association of the Philippines will invest in blending facilities that will be stationed in local municipalities.

"These blending facilities, that can process 10,000 to 20,000 metric tons of fertilizers, will allow us to introduce new fertilizer packs of 10 kilograms and 50 kilograms, which the small farmers will find to be more affordable," added Aristorenas.

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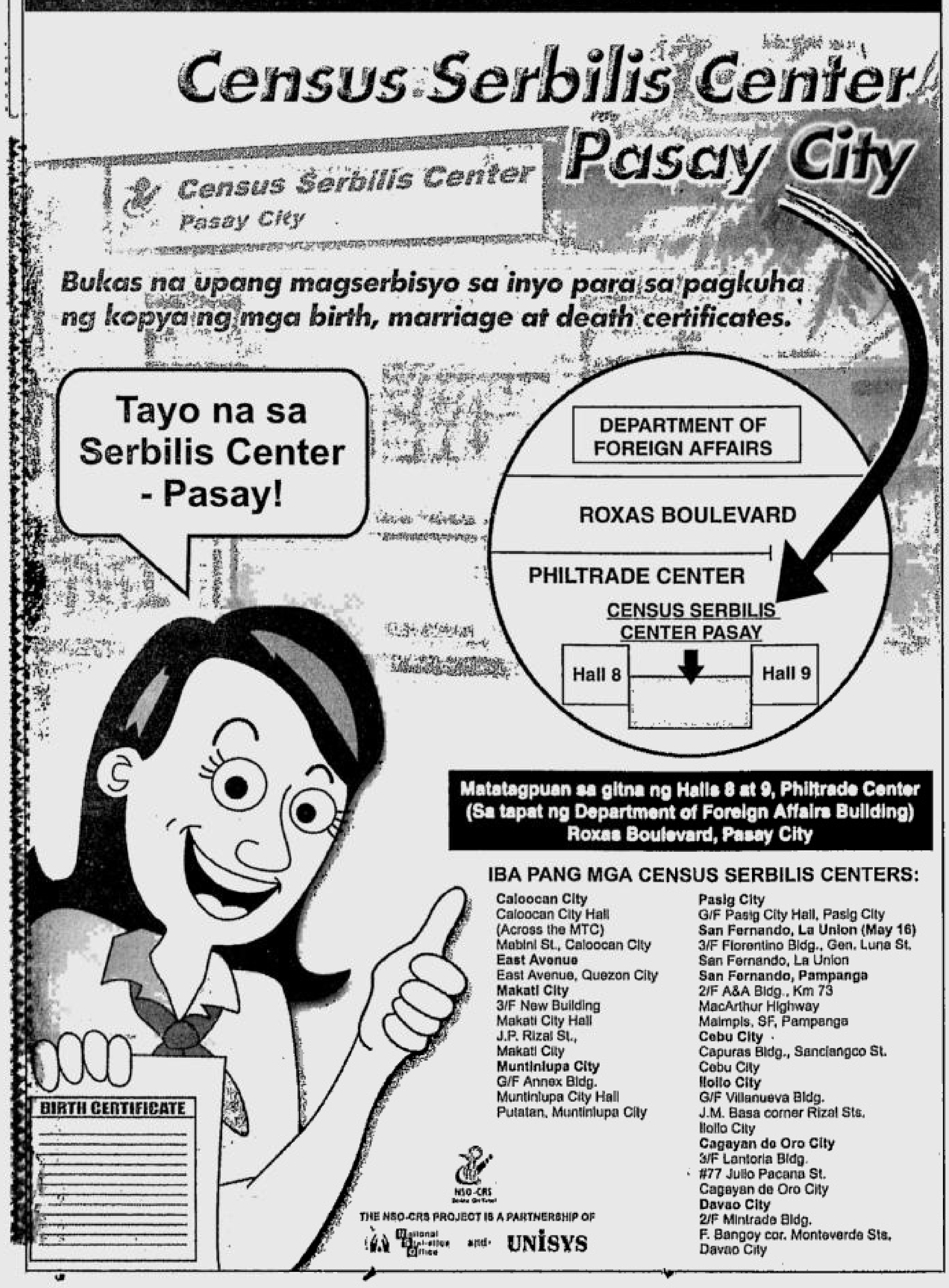
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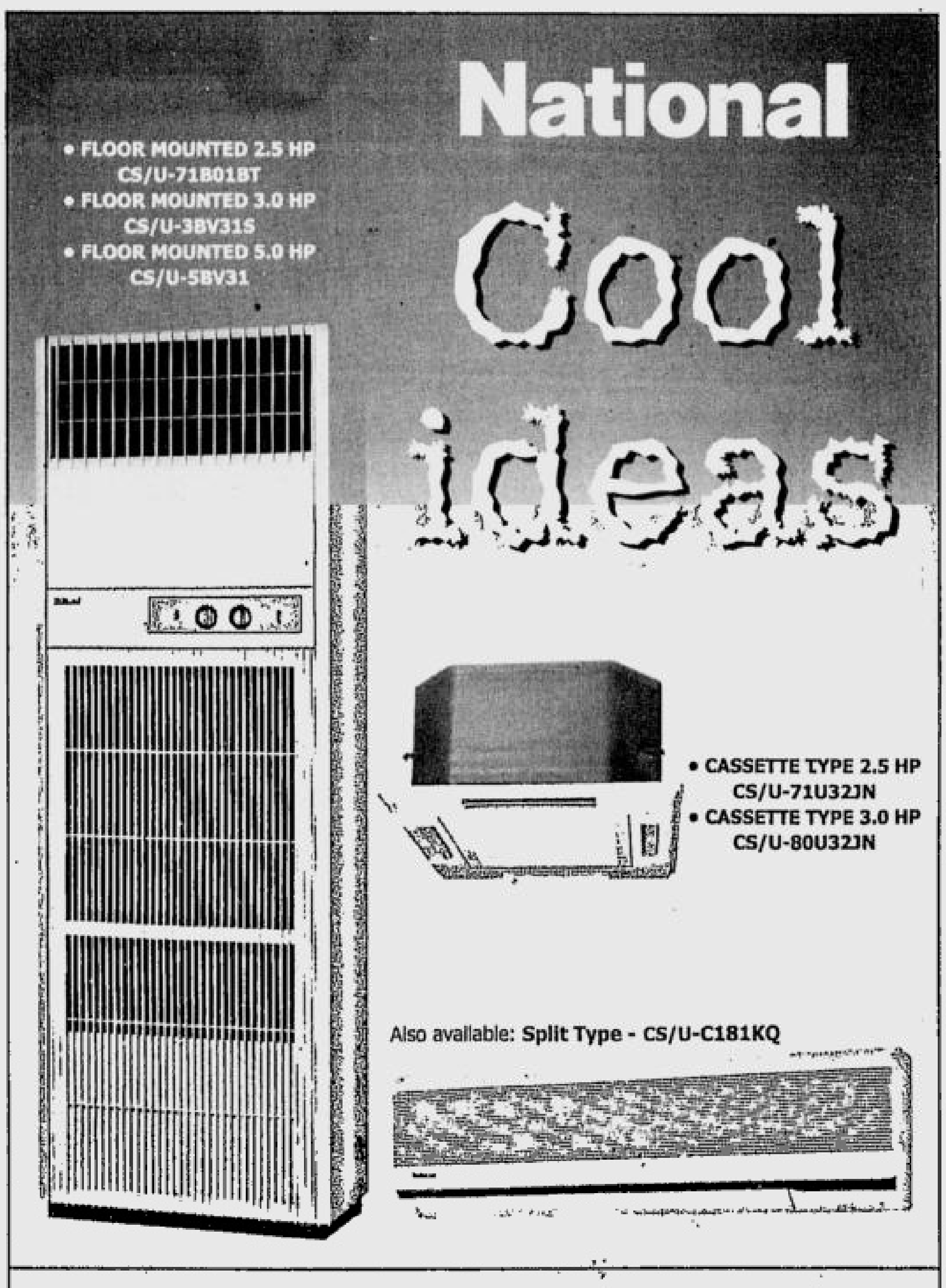

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Finex's femmes fatales

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

A LEADING female member of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines and two male colleagues are now facing libel charges upon the complaint of former Finex president Rosario Bernardo.

The three—Grace Tiongco, Guilbert Aquitana and George Tan—face two counts of libel for having written two letters to the Finex board last year protesting the alleged leakage of test questions by Bernardo.

The Finex test questions and answers for the intercollegiate finance competition were allegedly lent by Bernardo to Picpa, the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Bernardo, a lawyer, sued for libel after the three colleagues allegedly circulated copies of the letter even to non-Finex board members.

What complicated and divided Finex is that the ethics committee, then headed by Alfredo Parungao, recommended the censure of the three whistleblowers instead of Bernardo. The three naturally protested to the board.

In an attempt to bring the issue to a closure, the present Finex board headed by Conchita Manabat, who also happens to be a leading Picpa member, voted against censuring the three. The board also decided not to pursue any more investigation against both the accusers and the accused, deeming the case closed. Or so they thought.

Apparently, Bernardo did not drop the libel complaint against the three despite the Finex *modus vivendi*. And last month, the Makati fiscal ruled in favor of Bernardo, elevating the complaint to the Makati Regional Trial Court.

Tiongco, Aquitana and Tan are now out on bail, suffering the indignity of having been photographed and fingerprinted like any accused criminal.

Dispirited '67

THE LONG honeymoon between Makati Shangri-La and the Spirit of '67 may be over.

According to the grapevine, the hotel management did not take it kindly after the band, so-called because the core band members came from Ateneo high school class of 1967, twice made a no-show on its Thursday commitment to play at the hotel's Conway's bar.

The word is that the band and the hotel are currently renegotiating the terms of the contract, with specific dos and don'ts now prominently stipulated.

Thanks to the Spirit of '67, Conway's became the after-hour refuge of the baby boomers during the dark Erap days, with the bar literally overflowing with middle-aged executives and matrons dancing and thump-

COCKTALES/B4

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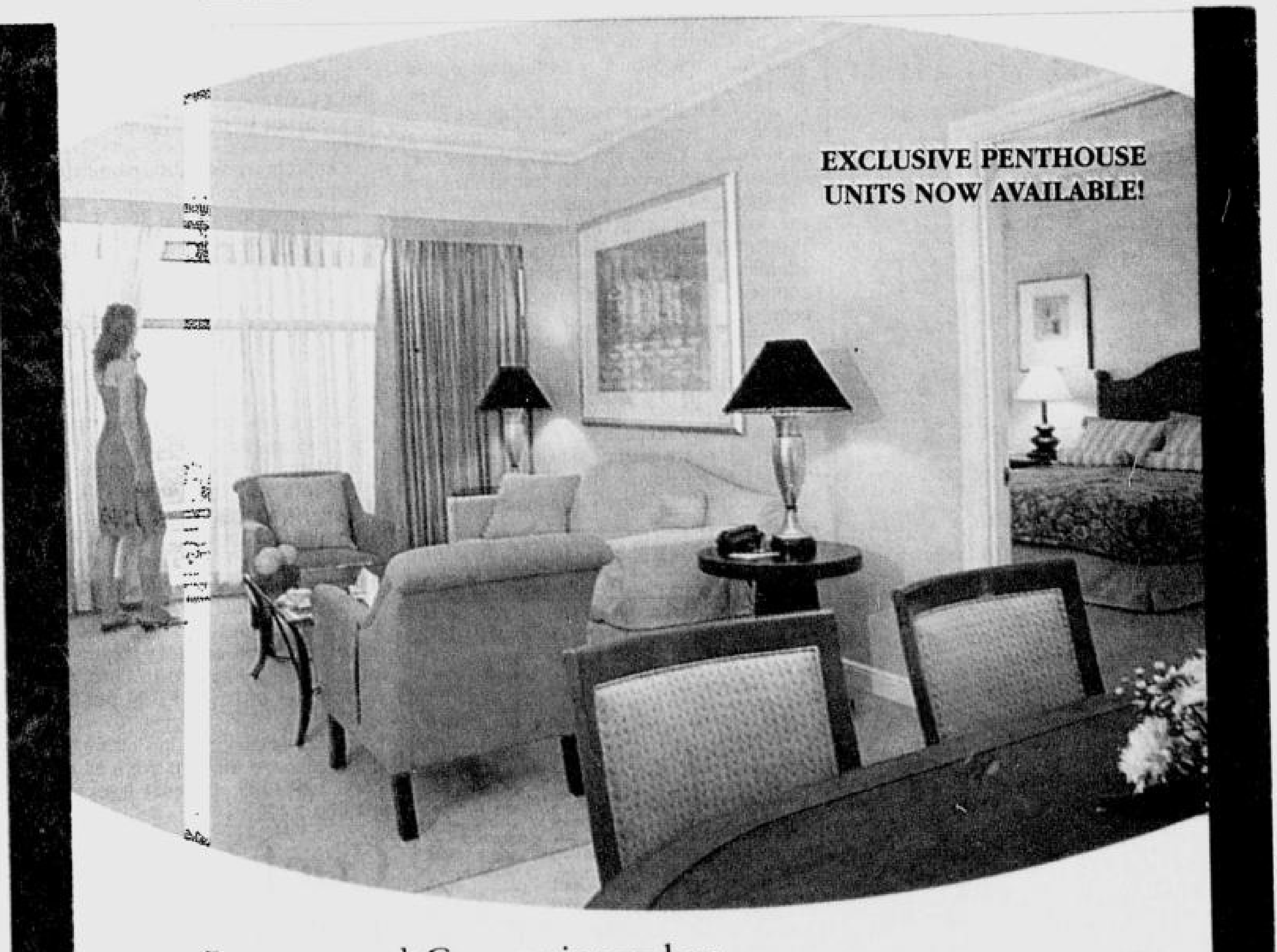

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How to draw and use trend lines

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

THE PHILIPPINES is arranging a currency-swap agreement with Korea. This means that tons of won will enter the country and we will all be eating won ton soup. And instead of housewives, we will have Korea girls. We already have a swap agreement with Japan, but that is fine as I have a yen for their currency.

* * *

SUU KHI will soon be visiting Norway and then Japan, where she will be known as SUU KHI YAKI. The Japanese prime minister, who is causing terror with his reforms, is known as Terroryaki.

I have many enquiries about the Omnibus Power Bill and the PPA. It is quite simple really. The Omnibus Power Bill allows the government to buy omnibuses, or buses as they are called for short, from China at favorable prices. The PPA, Product Paid Anyway, means that we have to pay for them whether the Chinese deliver or not. This agreement is unique and applies only to the Philippines.

Actually, this arose as the result of a crisis situation. When President Ramos came to power, he found that there wasn't any. Rather than Fidel around, he offered Independent Power Producers a fixed dollar unit payment for a guaranteed amount of electricity, used or not. Unfortunately, many factories and offices had installed their own generators, and other forms of energy were used. So with the downturn in the economy, we are only using 59 percent of the power produced, but paying for all of it. Worse still, the peso has depreciated almost 50 percent from 26 to 50, so we are paying almost double. The end result is that we are paying 3.3 times the going rate and that is why we have the highest electricity rates in Asia, excluding Japan.

President Macapagal-Arroyo wants to renegotiate these arrangements but if she reneges on the word of a previous President, she herself creates a precedent. I hope she can come up with a gloria's solution.

The government is opening 80 call centers in Manila this year. Soon, they will be advertising for call girls.

One of the reasons that Meralco lost money is that they are supplying electricity to the ohmless.

The Philippines is appealing to the EU for a quota to export tuna. For further details, watch tonight's program, "Name that tuna."

* * *

WHATEVER kind of charts you use, you can always draw trend lines. Obviously, they must pass through at least two points and frequently, they are parallel, though they can be convergent, making a triangle orwedge, or occasionally divergent. If they are parallel and horizontal, then they are showing support and resistance levels, which I wrote about at some length about three weeks ago. Clearly, a breakout in either direction is very important.

If the parallel lines are sloping upward, the stock is in an up trend and you want to be in it. Buy when it is close to the bottom of the trend line and sell half when it is near the top. If the stock starts to show weakness, immediately sell the other half; if the stock breaks the upper trend line, as well it may, it will continue to move up for several days, usually at an accelerated pace. You can also apply this reasoning to Bollinger Bands, which widen when a stock becomes volatile and narrow when it is dormant.

If the slope is in a down trend, you should be out of it since you should never trade against the trend. Even if it breaks the upper trend line, it is not particularly meaningful until there is sufficient upward momentum to cause the trend line to level out. If it should break the lower trend line, you should short it, but unfortunately that is not allowed in this country. It is in the US and the UK, but the broker I worked for did not allow employees to short stocks. So the only thing I ever shorted was an electric light bulb.

If the trend lines are converging, at some point they must meet. As the lines converge toward the apex, the stock must break out in one direction or the other. Providing, the breakout occurs a reasonable time before reaching the apex, the stock will go in the direction of the breakout. It is amazing how accurate penetrations of triangles are.

Again, I like to relate price action to people, so what is happening is that sellers are getting weaker, declining tops, and buyers are getting stronger, rising bottoms. Probability favors that in a neutral market, the triangle is more likely to be broken on the up side, when it will become a buy.

If it is a wedge with a horizontal top and a series of rising bottoms, it is likely to break out on the up side but only if it can penetrate the strong resistance level. If it is a wedge with a horizontal lower line and a series of declining tops, it is more likely to break to the down side, unless the support can hold, which is doubtful as sellers are getting stronger.

Using trend lines is one of the simplest forms of technical analysis and does not require any special skill. Anyone can do it, even I.

(If you want to know how to construct trend channels or envelopes, let me know and I will explain it. Just contact mrbearbull @hotmail.com.)

Ang Tan Golf Club & Shares, Inc.
SEC Licensed Golf & Club Shares Brokers No. 10575
265 Kalentong Street, Mandaluyong City

SELLING:	
Alabang "A"	1,600,000
Baguio Country Club	730,000
Camp John Hay Golf	280,000
Canlubang Golf	600,000
Capitol Hills	125,000
Eagle Ridge "A"	348,000
Fontana "A/B/C/D"	Please call
Forest Hills "A/B/C"	230/250/260
Manila Golf (Indv./Corp.)	Please call
Manila Polo	2,790,000
Manila Southwoods "A/B"	630,000/700,000
Makati Sports "A"	250,000
Mt. Malarayat "A/B/C"	350/400/500
Orchard "A/B/C"	220/250/360
Puerto Azul	100,000
Royale Tagaytay	80,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,700,000
Tagaytay Highland Club	420,000
Tagaytay Midlands	795,000
Valle Verde CC	160,000
Wack Wack	7,200,000

BUYING:	
Alabang "A"	1,550,000
Baguio Country Club	720,000
Calatagan "A"	70,000
Camp John Hay Golf	270,000
Fontana "A/B/C/D"	Please call
Forest Hill "A/B/C"	220,000
Manila Golf (Indv.)	11,000,000
Manila Polo	2,750,000
Manila Southwoods "A/B"	630,000/700,000
Mimosa Indv./Corp. C-3	120,000/275,000
Orchard "A/B/C"	200/220/300
Quezon City Sports	200,000
Tagaytay Highland Club/Golf	400,000/P's call
Tagaytay Midlands	Please call
Sta. Elena "A/B"	1.750M/2.0M
Valley Golf	250,000
Wack Wack	7,000,000

Other Shares & Free Playing rights available

Connie Ang
Trading Manager/Real Estate Broker
Corinthian Garden House 35M, Valle Verde House 13M, Valleygolf House 5,000m² 16M, Bel-air, Dasma, Greenhills, Greenmeadows, Ayalaland, Tagaytay Highlands Lot, Condo, Spa, Woodland, Ortigas & Makati Condo rental.
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BUY/SELL COUNTRY CLUB SHARES
AS OF MAY 17, 2002

		ASKED PRICE	BID PRICE
1.	ALABANG COUNTRY CLUB "A"	1,650,000.00	-
2.	BAGUIO COUNTRY CLUB	800,000.00	-
3.	BUENAVISTA NATURE PARK & COUNTRY CLUB	Please call	-
4.	CALATAGAN GOLF CLUB	-	100,000 all-in
5.	CAPITOL HILLS GOLF CLUB	120,000.00	-
6.	COUNTRY CLUB AT TAGAYTAY	500,000.00	400,000.00
7.	EASTRIDGE GOLF CLUB	200,000.00	-
8.	FAIRWAYS & BLUEWATER		Please call
9.	FONTANA "D"	70,000.00	-
10.	FOREST HILLS GOLF CLUB "A"	-	200,000.00
11.	MAKATI SPORTS CLUB "A"	250,000	-
12.	MANILA GOLF CLUB (Ind.)	-	11,000,000.00
13.	MANILA POLO CLUB	-	2,700,000.00
14.	MANILA SOUTHWOODS "B"	-	700,000.00
15.	MIMOSA (Ind.)	-	120,000.00
16.	MONTEMAR BEACH CLUB	35,000.00	-
17.	MT. MALARAYAT "B"	400,000.00	-
18.	ORCHARD GOLF CLUB "B"	275,000.00	-
19.	ORCHARD GOLF CLUB "C"	-	330,000.00
20.	PUERTO AZUL BEACH CLUB "A"	100,000.00	-
21.	PUNTA FUEGO	650,000.00	500,000.00
22.	PHILIPPINE COLUMBIAN ASSOCIATION	80,000.00	-
23.	ROCKWELL	550,000.00	-
24.	RIVIERA GOLF CLUB "A"	200,000.00	-
25.	RIVIERA GOLF CLUB "B"	250,000.00	-
26.	RIVIERA GOLF CLUB "C"	350,000.00	-
27.	STA. ELENA GOLF CLUB "A"	1,700,000.00	-
28.	SHERWOOD HILLS "A"	-	75,000.00
29.	SHERWOOD HILLS "B"	230,000.00	-
30.	SPA & LODGE	800,000.00	-
31.	SUBIC YACHT CLUB	200,000.00	-
32.	TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	-	770,000.00
33.	VALLEY GOLF CLUB	-	240,000.00
34.	WACK WACK GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB	7,000,000.00	-
35.	THE COUNTRY CLUB	2,800,000.00	-
36.	OTHERS	Please call	-

PLAYING RIGHTS ALSO AVAILABLE

ALABANG COUNTRY CLUB	P30,000.00	STA. ELENA GOLF CLUB	60,000.00
CALATAGAN GOLF CLUB	free rental	TAGAYTAY GOLF CLUB	40,000.00
CANLUBANG GOLF CLUB	55,000.00	VALLEY GOLF CLUB	15,000.00
COUNTRY CLUB AT TAGAYTAY	20,000.00	WACK WACK GOLF CLUB	80,000.00
MAKATI SPORTS CLUB	20,000.00	ORCHARD GOLF CLUB	20,000.00
MANILA SOUTHWOODS	30,000.00	OTHERS	Please call

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Asst. Treas. / Comptroller
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Consolidation expected to continue this week

MARKET PLAY

By Doris C. Dumlao

LOCAL stocks will likely continue consolidating this week due to lack of fresh positive news to perk up investor interest that was dampened by the generally weak first-quarter corporate results, traders said.

A possible market catalyst this week, however, is Banco de Oro Universal Bank's listing tomorrow. The bank's P1.85-billion public offering siphoned off market liquidity in the last two weeks.

Due for release today by the National Statistics office is the report on the country's import bill for the month of March, seen as an important economic indicator particularly for the export industry, which is dependent on imported inputs.

Last week, the main-share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index closed at 1,349.63, or almost the same as the previous week's close. The market seemed to have simply shrugged off some positive news during the week such as the decision of California Public Employees' Retirement Systems (Calpers) to maintain its investments in the country and JP Morgan's rosy outlook on the economy.

"I think the market will continue consolidating between the 1,330 and 1,370 levels in the next few weeks on the back of mixed concerns," said Astro del Castillo, head of research at A&A Securities.

"Investors are getting to be non-enthusiastic due to the slower first-quarter results of most companies. There's also the news about the government exceeding its budget deficit. Even the US economy is seeing a slower recovery," he explained.

At the very least, Del Castillo said the market was not going down any further.

"This means that investors are still bullish for the rest of the year. Despite the light value turnover, we can take consolation on the fact that the likes of Calpers and Standard & Poor's are upgrading their outlook on the Philippines," he said.

Oliver Plana, head of research at Asiasec Equities, said corporate news would likely taper off after last week's release of first-quarter earnings. He said the Phisix would likely be locked within a range of 1,320 to 1,380 points.

Stock market portal 2tradeasia.com said that among the near-term concerns that must be resolved to boost investors confidence were:

- Appropriate valuation parameters following the release of the first-quarter figures;
- Detailed agenda on how the authorities plan to resolve the purchased power adjustment (PPA) issue and its ripple effects on the economy; and,
- The El Niño dry spell's impact on consumer spending and agriculture production.

"Others may just be waiting until spurts of foreign selling activity dissipate in selected issues. Overall, buyers will be at an advantage to seize opportunities within tradable ranges, as sellers lock themselves in anticipation of an improved economic prospects in the second semester," 2tradeasia.com said.

2tradeasia.com said it was the best time to start hunting for stocks that have established volatility to maximize trading profits.

"The sharp slide in Nymex crude prices as a result of higher-than-expected inventory report in the US provides trading windows for companies like Petron Corp. (potential price target of P1.88-P1.94 per share)," it said.

2tradeasia.com said the Phisix's immediate and secondary supports were at 1,330 and 1,300, while the resistance level was placed at 1,400-1,420.

GG & A Club Shares
SEC License Broker #007575 * As of May 20, 2002

CLUB	BUYER	SELLER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,600,000	1,700,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	Please Call	2,000,000
Baguio Country Club	700,000	740,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	70,000	100,000
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	100,000	110,000
Camp John Hay	250,000	280,000
Canlubang	500,000	Please Call
Canyonwoods	Please Call	200,000
Capitol Hills	-	130,000
Celebrity Sports Club	100,000	220,000
Eagle Ridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	Please Call
Eastridge "A"	Please Call	Please Call
Evercrest "A"	-	100,000
Forest Hills "A"	200,000	220,000
Forest Hills "B"	230,000	250,000
Forest Hills "C"	-	280,000
Makati Sports Club "A"	250,000	280,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	280,000	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	15,000,000
Manila Golf (Individual)	12,000,000	14,000,000
Manila Polo	2,700,000	Please Call
Manila Southwoods "A"	650,000	830,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	700,000	800,000
Metropolitan Club "A"	-	120,000
Montemar (Individual)	30,000	40,000
Montemar (Corp)	60,000	-
Mt. Malarayat	300,000	350,000
Orchard Golf Club "A"	200,000	250,000
Orchard Golf Club "B"	-	250,000
Orchard Golf Club "C"	300,000	350,000
Pueblo de Oro "A"/"B"/"C"	-	Please Call
Puerto Azul		125,000
Quezon City Sports Club	200,000	220,000
Riviera Golf & Country Club "A"	-	Please Call
Rockwell	Please Call	550,000
Sherwood Hills "A"	-	130,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,700,000	1,800,000
Sta. Elena "B"	2,100,000	-
Subic Bay Yacht (Corporate)	-	320,000
Subic Bay Yacht (Individual)	-	170,000
Tagaytay Country Club	410,000	450,000
Tagaytay Highlands	800,000	-
Tagaytay Midlands	780,000	850,000
The Country Club	Please Call	Please Call
Valle Verde (Individual)	150,000	160,000
Valley Golf	240,000	
Wack-Wack Golf Club	6,700,000	7,000,000

PLAYING RIGHTS (Available Lessors)

Alabang "A"	25,000	Mimosa Golf	25,000
Calatagan "A"	10,000	Orchard "A"	30,000
Canlubang	60,000	Riviera "A"	15,000
Eagleridge	15,000	Sta. Elena	60,000
Eastridge "A"	20,000	Tagaytay CC	20,000
Forest Hills	30,000	Tagaytay Golf	45,000
Manila Southwoods	20,000	Tagaytay Mid.	35,000
Makati Sports "A"	25,000	Valley Golf	20,000
Manila Golf	300,000	Wack-Wack	90,000

For more information, please call:
ALABANG 850-8223 • Fax 772-1617
MAKATI 840-1761 • Fax 894-3021 / 750-7894
or e-mail at: ggashare@mozcom.com
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Partial List: Please Call For Other Clubs ● 05/17/02

	SELLING AT	BUYING AT	Last Date at Same Asked Price
1. ALABANG "A"	----	1,600,000	---
2. BAGUIO CC	----	CALL NOW	---
3. CALATAGAN GC "A"	90,000	—	May 93
4. CAMP JOHN HAY	300,000	250,000	----
5. CANLUBANG GC	625,000	—	Dec 90
6. CAPITOL HILLS	130,000	—	July 91
7. CC AT TAGAYTAY	450,000	—	Pre-sell
8. CELEBRITY CLUB	CALL NOW	—	Nov 96
9. EAGLERIDGE "A"	—	300,000	—
10. EAGLERIDGE "B"	500,000	—	----
11. FOREST HILLS "A"	215,000	—	July 00
12. MAKATI SPORTS "A"	—	250,000	---
13. MANILA GOLF (INDIV)	CALL NOW	—	Dec 94
14. MANILA POLO CLUB	—	2,750,000	—
15. MLA SOUTHWOODS "A"	670,000	—	Pre-sell
16. ORCHARD "A"/"C"	CALL NOW	—	Pre-sell
17. QUEZON CITY SPORTS "A"	—	205,000	May 95
18. RIVIERA GCC "A"	CALL NOW	—	Pre-sell
19. STA. ELENA "A"	1,800,000	—	Oct 95
20. SUBIC BAY YACHT (CORP)	—	CALL NOW	—
21. TAGAYTAY HIGHLANDS	—	820,000	Pre-sell
22. TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	825,000	750,000	—
23. THE COUNTRY CLUB	CALL NOW	—	—
24. VALLEY GOLF	—	220,000	—
25. WACK WACK GOLF	CALL NOW	6,600,000	Mar 98

AVAILABLE LESSORS FOR PLAYING RIGHTS

ALABANG CC "A"	25,000	RIVIERA CC "A"	18,000
CC AT TAGAYTAY	20,000	STA. ELENA "A"	55,000
EAGLERIDGE "A"	10,000	TAGAYTAY H'LANDS	35,000
MANILA GOLF	450,000	TAGAYTAY MIDLANDS	30,000
MIMOSA (INDIV)	8,000	WACK WACK GOLF	60,000

A partial list of shareXCHANGE Clubs

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
CANYON WOODS	CC @ TAGAYTAY	CELEBRITY	VALLE VERDE
CAPITOL HILLS	FOREST HILLS "A"	ORCHARD "A"	STA. ELENA "A"
CELEBRITY	BAGUIO CC	PUERTO AZUL	VALLE VERDE

[illegible]

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Friday, May 17, 2002)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Bank of the Phil. Islands	56	56	56	56	868,000
China Banking Corp.	630	630	630	630	1,820
Citystate Savings Bank	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38.5	38.5	38.5	38.5	66,300
First E-Bank Corp.	1.82	1.82	1.78	1.78	158,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	40.5	40.5	40	40	101,000
Philippine National Bank	42	42	41	41	12,600
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	600
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.25	12.25	12.25	12.25	6,000
Security Bank Corp.	16	16	16	16	52,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	23.5	23.5	23.25	23.25	24,300
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Bankard Inc.	1.38	1.4	1.36	1.38	236,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	0.42	0.44	0.42	0.44	90,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1410	1420	1410	1420	100
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1080	1085	1080	1080	23,420
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	30.5	31	30.5	31	1,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	30,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	690	695	675	680	23,360
Island Info And Tech Inc.	0.04	0.041	0.04	0.04	4,000,000
Pilitel	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.37	2,580,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	445	447.5	442.5	445	183,100
Ivantage Corp.	0.49	0.49	0.48	0.48	230,000
Philweb.Com Inc.	0.017	0.017	0.016	0.017	42,700,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	18,600
Manila Electric Co. B	38	38.5	38	38	52,200
Petron Corp.	1.76	1.8	1.76	1.78	16,725,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	130,000
Trans-Asia Oil And Energy	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	20,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.22	1.22	1.2	1.2	120,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	884,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	20,000
Negros Navigation Co.Inc.	0.7	0.71	0.7	0.71	260,000
William, Gothong & Aboitiz	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	20,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3	3	3	3	1,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	50,000
Union Cement Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	280,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.08	2.08	163,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	13.75	14	13.5	14	108,600
La Tondena Distillers Inc.	33.5	33.5	32.5	33	217,000
RFM Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	118,000
Swift Food Inc.	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	18,000
San Miguel Corp. A	49.5	50	49	49.5	62,200
San Miguel Corp. B	58.5	58.5	57.5	57.5	70,500
Universal Robina Corp.	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.6	672,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	625,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.36	2.36	2.34	2.36	554,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.25	0.34	0.25	0.3	2,070,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	14,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	30,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.6	0.6	0.59	0.59	1,770,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	500,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	100,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	20,000
Ebecom Holdings Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.1	6.5	14,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.52	1.52	210,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	26.5	27	26.5	27	2,600
Global Equities Inc.	0.125	0.13	0.125	0.125	600,000
House Of Investments Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	250,000
Ionics Inc.	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	10,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.74	1.7	1.74	385,000
Medco Holdings	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.16	390,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.79	0.79	0.78	0.79	530,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.59	30,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	2,400,000
Music Corp.	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.23	240,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	1,090,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	400,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Cen Azucar De Tarlac	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	220,000
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	5,000
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	5	5	5	5	1,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.55	0.65	0.55	0.65	70,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	10.75	11	10.75	11	17,300
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.38	0.4	0.38	0.4	830,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.36	30,000
Manila Jockey Club	13	13	13	13	300
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	31.5	32	31.5	31.5	407,000
Globe Telecom Hldg (Pdr)	830	835	810	820	8,050
Jollibee Warrants	13.25	13.25	13.25	13.25	2,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,500
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,300
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	6,000
Philweb.Com Inc. -Warrants	0.0048	0.0048	0.0046	0.0048	1,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7.1	7.2	7.1	7.2	673,000
Cityland Development Corp.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	70,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	460,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	480,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	3.05	3.2	3.05	3.1	15,375,000
Highlands Prime Leisure	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8	30,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	110,000
SM Development Corp.	1.02	1.08	1.02	1.02	182,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	5.8	5.9	21,429,000
MINING					
Itogon-Suyoc Mines Inc.	0.042	0.043	0.042	0.043	5,800,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	250,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	550,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	1,000,000
Interport Res.	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	0.0036	1,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	7,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	15,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	200,000

CURRENCIES

May 17, 2002

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.096491	1.000000	49.5450
Japan	Yen	0.008559	0.007806	0.3867
United Kingdom	Pound	1.597697	1.457100	72.1920
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.140601	0.128228	6.3531
Switzerland	Franc	0.686594	0.626174	31.0238
Canada	Dollar	0.705820	0.643708	31.8925
Singapore	Dollar	0.607542	0.554078	27.4518
Australia	Dollar	0.602137	0.549149	27.2076
Bahrain	Dinar	2.908820	2.652661	131.4261
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.292390	0.266660	13.2117
Brunei	Dollar	0.606466	0.553097	27.4032
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000120	0.000109	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.025601	0.023348	1.1568
UAE	Dirham	0.298544	0.272272	13.4897
Korea	Won	0.000871	0.000794	0.0393
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.912000	45.1850
Brazil	Real	0.440151	0.401445	19.8896
Denmark	Kroner	0.133494	0.122602	6.0743
India	Rupee	0.022638	0.020429	1.0122
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.291465	0.263158	13.0382
Mexico	New Peso	0.116816	0.105764	5.2401
New Zealand	Dollar	0.503991	0.461404	22.8603
Norway	Kroner	0.132382	0.120671	5.9786
Pakistan	Rupee	0.018473	0.016681	0.8265
South Africa	Rand	0.109430	0.098549	4.8826
Sweden	Kroner	0.108156	0.098902	4.9001
Syria	Pound	0.025341	0.022883	1.1337
Taiwan	NT Dollar	0.032117	0.029036	1.4386
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.001107	0.001000	0.0495

Cocktales

ing to the music of their youth.

Lawyers, lawyers

- QUISUMBING Torres, the law firm that represented taipan Alfonso Yuchengco in the Sandiganbayan case involving the PLDT ownership row (Cocktales, May 13, 2002), said its principal and the firm purposely withheld payment of the docket fees on the belief that the Sandiganbayan Law exempts the parties from the costs of the proceedings before the said court.

The Supreme Court ruled otherwise, but nevertheless allowed Quisumbing Torres to proceed with its complaint-in-intervention case with the Sandiganbayan, saying AY and his lawyers could not be blamed for having relied on the vague provisions of the Sandiganbayan Law.

- ROMULO Mabanta has taken the unusual step of hiring five new lawyers to beef up its corporate finance practice on the assumption that foreign investments and economic growth will return with sustained vigor after the 2004 elections. The firm is of course proceeding on the assumption that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will continue to be in Malacañang after 2004.

Heard through the grapevine

A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR class suit against New York-based fund manager Lilia Clemente-Calderon is in the offing.

The class suit is being handled by ex-ConCom delegate Fely Aquino, whose husband, now Sen. Joker Arroyo, was once a director of the Calderon-managed First Philippine Fund.

(Cocktales may be reached by e-mail at cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Why you should pay for electricity you don't use

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

SOME lawmakers are in uproar over the revelation that Meralco consumers are paying for electricity they do not use, and, worse, that is not even generated. Sen. Blas Ople, ever the master of hyperbole, calls it the swindle of the century.

Let us go back to recent history. Marcos decided that we should shift to nuclear power. He ordered the Bataan nuclear plant built. Since their steam-powered plants were going to be subsequently phased out, Meralco rightly suspended all maintenance and literally ran the plants down to the ground. Then, because of the accident to the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Russia, the Aquino administration scrapped the Bataan nuclear plant. But at that point, Meralco's plants were beyond rehabilitation economically. That is why we have all those terrible brownouts.

With no money or financing to build new plants, the Ramos administration negotiated with the private sector, local and foreign, to put up the facilities. The government guaranteed to pay for all their output, whether generated or not. Napocor passes these costs to Meralco, which in turn passes on to us consumers.

Meralco generates no more than 20 percent of the demand of its franchise area. The 80 percent is supplied by power plants, including those of the IPPs, all over Luzon. For instance, 80 percent of the electricity generated by the Bicol geothermal plants are transmitted to Meralco.

When an area like Luzon is supplied with electricity by a network, or grid, of interconnected power plants, worldwide engineering practice requires that total generating capacity should at least be 150 percent of demand. The 50 percent in excess supply is standby power, always ready to be used if there is a sudden but temporary surge of demand such as at Christmas, when a plant is shut down for maintenance or repairs, or if a plant is knocked out permanently by a catastrophe such as a severe eruption of Mt. Mayon. This standby system assures the consumers a steady supply of electricity no matter what happens.

These standby power plants are necessary because electricity cannot be stored or bottled. Before a factory is shut down for maintenance, a second or third shift can be opened to build up its finished products inventory. This cannot be done with electricity. If a power plant is shut down, for whatever reason, there has to be a standby plant that can be turned on to take up the slack, almost instantly.

The consumer has to pay for these standby power plants, even when generating no electricity. This backup system is part of the entire intricate grid of generation, transmission and distribution facilities that brings electricity to your doorstep. You pay for all these services, including the standby power plants, even if these lie idle half of the time. And they lie idle most of the time precisely because they are on standby basis.

In the real world, you pay for similar standby costs. Your hospital or hotel bill includes a portion of the cost of the emergency generator even if it is never turned on during your stay. You continue paying the premium on the fire insurance policy even if your house never burns down. You never consider yourself swindled by the hospital, the hotel or the insurance company. The money you pay for all these services is money well spent.

Senators Manny Villar and Ralph Recto say that, since the standby power is paid for anyway even when it is not actually generated, then the consumers might as well use it. I am already using up all the electricity I need in the house. To use the excess electricity, I will have to keep the lights on the whole day, run the air-con round-the-clock, and turn on the range even when there is nothing to be cooked on it. What good will all this do?

A squatter's hovel may not be able to use the extra electricity, even if it were free.

And if the Senate were to run its central air-conditioning system and keep the lights on 20 hours every day even during recess, what shall have been accomplished?

Moreover, if we all use up the excess electricity, there will no longer be any standby power. We will then have to build new power plants. The cycle begins again.

I am not saying that the IPP contracts should not be reviewed. But in doing so, we should keep in mind that the Ramos administration, pressed to solve the severe power shortage we were all suffering then, negotiated from a position of weakness. To criticize the Ramos administration 10 years later is petty faultfinding.

BPI's full mobile phone services OKd

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MONETARY Board, the policy-making body of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, has approved the application of Bank of the Philippine Islands and its two savings banks to provide the "first-of-its-kind" mobile phone services to its customers.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said BPI, BPI Family Bank and BPI Direct Savings Bank could start offering full mobile phone services to its clients who subscribe to Globe Telecom Inc.

With the use of the short messaging system (SMS), the banking services may later be expanded to cover subscribers of other mobile phone companies.

Reyes said the application of BPI and its two savings banks was the first-of-its-kind to be approved by the Monetary Board. Other banks provide only limited types of transactions using text messaging through mobile phones.

"The new service will allow BPI's clients to inquire and transact on previously enrolled savings, current, and credit card accounts," said the BSP official.

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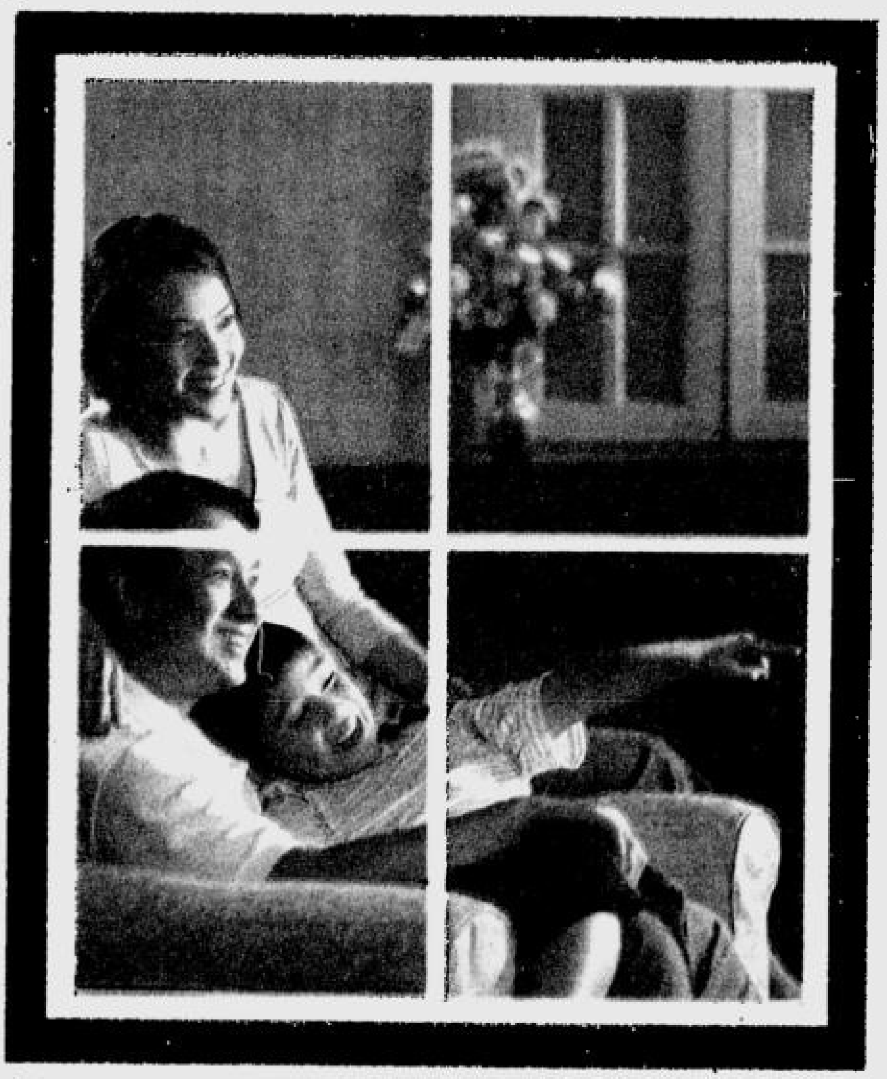

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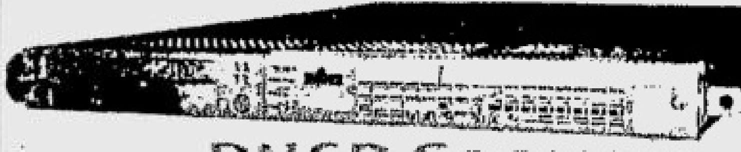

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2001 National Production Contest

Annual Awards Nig
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Charlie Yabut, Romeo Galeos, Jr., and Leonor Atun were among those honored for their exemplary performance in 2001 during Manila Bankers Life's Award Night held at Holiday Inn Resort, Mimosa Estate, Clark Field, Pampanga last April 5, 2002.

CHAMPION AWARDS

ROMEO P. GALEOS, JR.
Galeos District - Visayas
MANAGER OF THE YEAR

LEONOR C. ATUN
Pancho District - BSTA
ASSOCIATE MANAGER OF THE YEAR

CHARLIE R. YABUT
Yabut District - NMA
UNDERWRITER OF THE YEAR

ARTURO S. PANCHO, JR.
Pancho District - BSTA
1st Runner-Up
Managers Category

MARGARITA I. PUNZALAN
Punzalan District - MMSO
2nd Runner-Up
Managers Category

ROLANDO T. SAAC
Galeos District - Visayas
1st Runner-Up
Underwriters Category

EDWIN Y. DELIEZO
Galeos District - Visayas
1st Runner-Up
Associate Managers Category

GROWTH ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

FOUNDER'S AWARDS

Managers Category

ROMEO P. GALEOS JR.
Galeos District - Visayas
1st Prize

Citations:

LINDA A. MARBELLA
Marbella District - BSTA

POSEDIO C. HERNANDEZ
Hernandez District -Visayas

Associate Managers Category

JINKY E. CATUBIG
Pancho District - BSTA
1st Prize

LEONORE C. ATUN
Pancho District - BSTA
2nd Prize

EDWIN Y. DELIEZO
Galeos District - Visayas
3rd Prize

LOLITA V. RUFO
Silvela District - Visayas
4th Prize

Underwriters Category

ROLANDO T. SAAC
Galeos District - Visayas
1st Runner-Up
Underwriters Category

CHAIRMAN'S AWARDS

Managers Category

ESTRELLA U. RAMAS
Ramas Dist. - MMSO
1st Runner-Up

Citation:

REMEDIOS C. CRUZ
Cruz District - MMSO

Underwriters Category

AIDA M. CASTILLO
Punzalan District - MMSO
1st Prize

Citations:

CONCEPCION L. PANUEL
Galeos District Visayas

ASELA C. ANCHETA
Pancho District BSTA

NANCY G. BAILON
Marbella District BSTA

HERCY R. PARDINAS
Pancho District BSTA

PRESIDENT'S AWARDS

Managers Category

GODOFREO B. SILVELA
Silvela District - Visayas
1st Prize

HERMILINA F. MARTIN
Martin District - MMSO
2nd Prize

AL G. MONEDA
Moneda District - MMSO
3rd Prize

Citation:

LUDOVICO P. BEUP
Beup District - MMSO

Underwriters Category

CHARLIE R. YABUT
Yabut District
1st Prize

BENJAMIN L. BALUYOT
Galeos District
2nd Prize

JOUIE M. TULABING
Galeos District
3rd Prize

JESSIE A. IYAS
Galeos District
4th Prize

JACK Y. NAVARRO
Tamayo District
5th Prize

JOSE L. BORLAGDAN
Pancho District
6th Prize

NORMITA Z. MARTIN
Martin District
7th Prize

CALIXTO R. YNCIERTO
Ramas District
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NECITA V. CANIZO
Pancho District
9th Prize

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Pancho District
10th Prize

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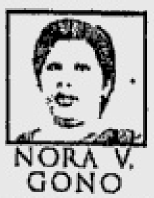
Pancho District
11th Prize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Galeos District
17th Prize

CARMELITA L. QUIMBO
Galeos District
18th Prize

JEANITH D. SUMALPONG
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19th Prize

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Balderama District
20th Prize

FELIX M. CALONGE
Galeos District
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DIOSCORO D. SUAREZ
Beldad District
22nd Prize

VILMA M. LAZARO
Martin District
23rd Prize

VICTOR C. VERDUZ
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24th Prize

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Pancho District
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JOSEPHINE M. DIMALANTA
Escolastico District
26th Prize

JOSEFINA C. TOMADA
Tomada District
27th Prize

AURELIA M. BAYONA
Punzalan District
28th Prize

LORNA S. BOTO
Punzalan District
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MARYBELL L. PACARA
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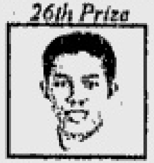
Beldad District
31st Prize

AILEEN G. LOPEZ
Aninipot District
32nd Prize

SONIA U. DACUT
Tomada District
33rd Prize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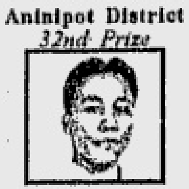
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GMA's Japan visit to affect auto tax reform plan, says DTI

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's trip to Japan next week could prove crucial in steering the course of vehicle tax reforms being reviewed by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Finance.

Trade and Industry Manuel A. Roxas II said that while the DTI was still weighing the pros and cons of shifting from an engine-based to a value-based tax scheme, its final decision on the vehicle tax reforms would be "partly affected" by the President's trip to Japan.

The President is likely to meet with top officials of Japanese vehicle makers such as Toyota, Mitsubishi, Honda, and Isuzu. Officials of these companies are expected to push for keeping the engine-based tax scheme and counter the intense lobbying efforts by the US government for a price-based tax system for the benefit of American car giant Ford Motor Co.

The local industry players met last week to come up with an industry position on the vehicle tax reforms being mulled by the DTI and DOF. A source said the group voted 10-1 to stick with the engine-based tax system with Ford expectedly voting for a shift to price-based taxation.

The industry players, which are predominantly Japanese assemblers, voted to push for a lower tax range of 10 to 35 percent from the present 15 to 100 percent and for the imposition of a flat 3-percent excise tax on Asian utility vehicles, pickup trucks and passenger vans.

The group felt that a flat 3-percent tax on AUVs was ideal because it would minimize the price adjustment on these hybrids while raising additional revenues for the government.

The majority of the members also voted to keep the tax-free status of trucks and buses although they were divided on whether this perk should apply to tourist buses.

Amid increasing pressure from Japanese and American assemblers, Roxas said the DTI was approaching the debate on vehicle tax reforms from "a holistic industrial development perspective rather than as a stand-alone issue."

The US trade representative and Ford have complained that the current tax system which exempts AUVs and taxes vehicles based on their engine size discriminated against the American brand's gas guzzling vehicles. Ford has proposed a flat tax rate on all vehicles, including AUVs, based on sticker prices. Ford does not have an AUV model, which is the biggest selling category of the automotive industry.

But the Japanese assemblers insist that the tax preference on AUVs should be maintained because it was the government's best bet in fulfilling its ambition of exporting a completely built up unit in the region.

Napocor willing to reopen talks with Meralco

THE NATIONAL Power Corp. said it was willing to resume talks with Manila Electric Co. to settle their row over a 10-year power supply contract.

Earlier reports said Meralco, Napocor's biggest customer and the country's largest power distributor, had terminated a 10-year supply contract with Napocor that was supposed to lapse in end-2004.

Napocor officer-in-charge Roland S. Quilala said in a statement that the state firm was open to another round of talks with Meralco to put a stop "to what appears to be a media war" between the two companies.

"Only Napocor and Meralco can solve whatever differences in interpretation there may be on the 10-year contract," Quilala said. He said Energy Secretary Vincent S. Perez Jr. was willing to help the contracting parties in coming up with a compromise solution.

But when Perez first heard of Meralco's action on the contract last Tuesday, he said the Lopez-controlled firm's action terminating the contract without "sitting down" first with Napocor was "condemnable."

"(One) cannot terminate a contract just like that," the energy chief said.

He was reacting to a statement made by Meralco treasurer Rafael Andrada that the utility had sent a termination notice to Napocor.

"We believe the Electric Power Industry Reform Act has superseded the supply contract," Andrada told reporters.

He said the two firms should have started negotiating for a transitional supply contract in September, but "Napocor ignored Meralco's request for such talks."

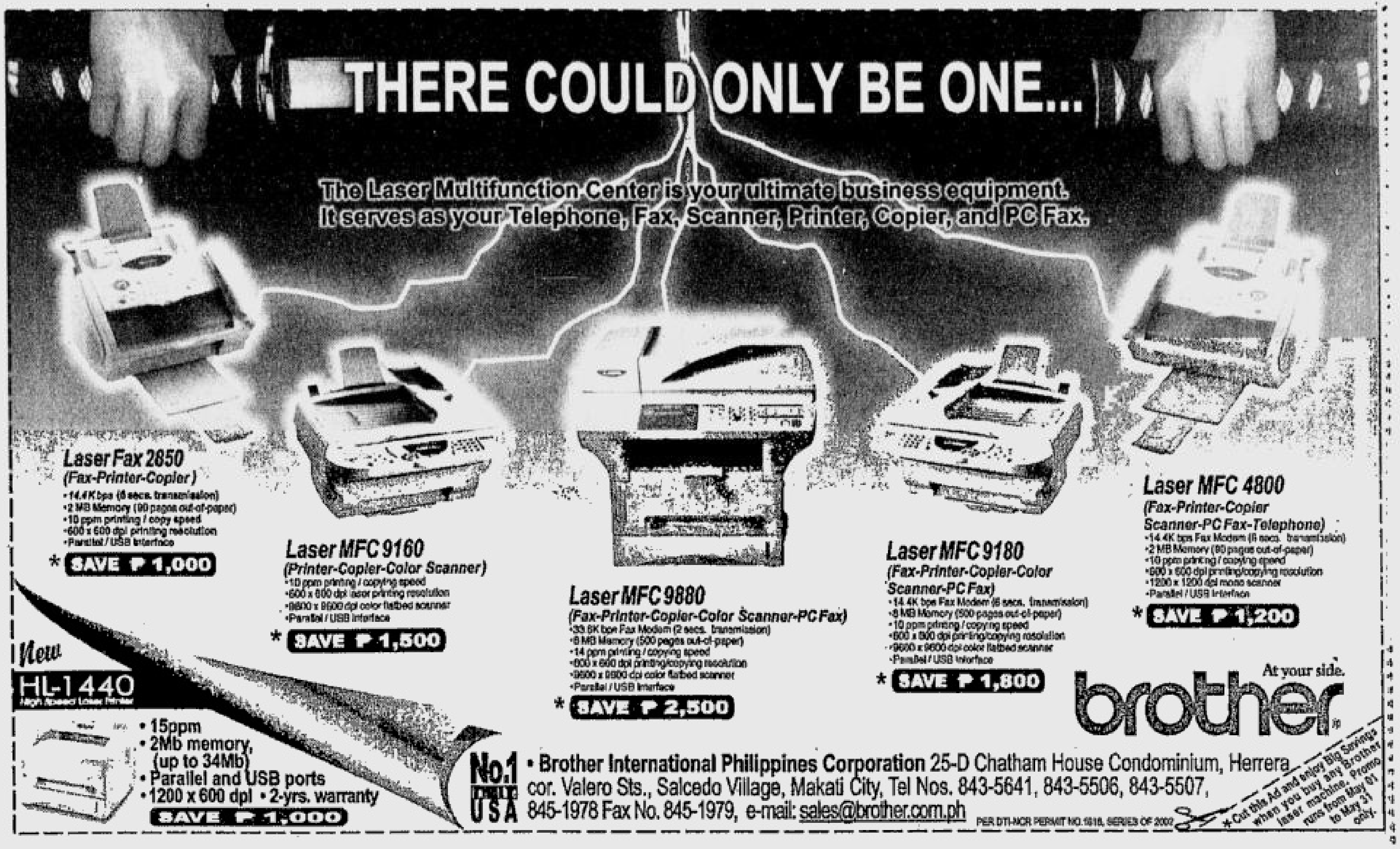
Sources said a transitional supply contract was meant to infuse the benefits of deregulation into contracts that were made before the power reform law was enacted last year.

The two parties were arguing mainly on whether Napocor could impose fines on Meralco if the latter failed to buy the agreed minimum of 3,600 megawatts a month from Napocor, and on whether Meralco could break off the agreement unilaterally.

Government data show that Meralco has been getting only 2,400 mw from Napocor since January and that Napocor has imposed a fine of P2.5 billion on Meralco for this.

Meralco has been increasing the volume of power bought from independent power producers like the 433-mw Mauban coal plant of Quezon Power Philippines and the 1,000-mw Sta. Rita gas-fired plant of First Gas Power Corp.

Ronnel W. Domingo



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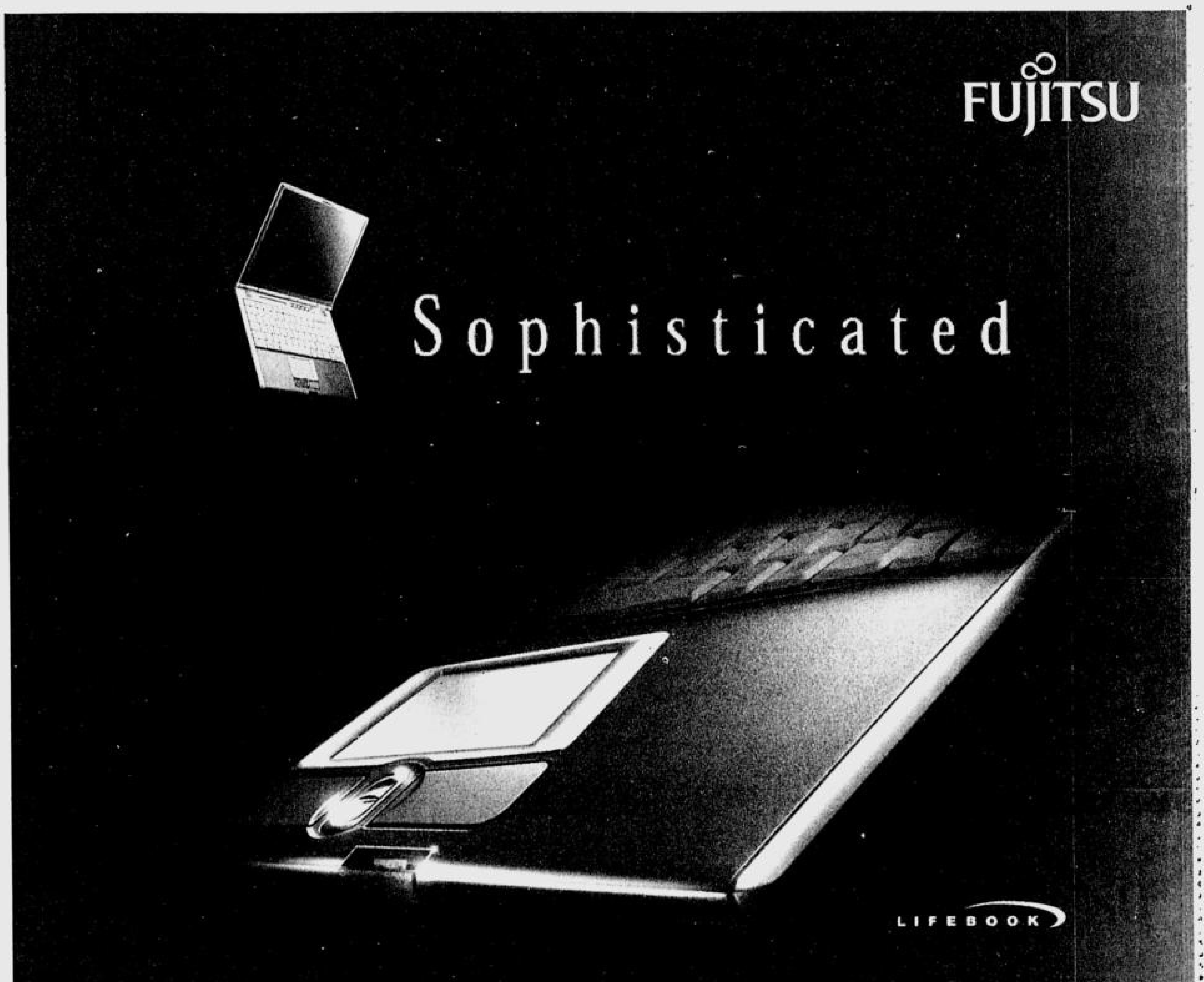

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Learn from BW history, SEC tells exchange

By Elena R. Torrijos

AS it closes the book on administrative cases against brokers over the BW Resources Corp. stock fraud scandal, the Securities and Exchange Commission has called on the Philippine Stock Exchange and Philippine Central Depository to address weaknesses in their systems so history will not repeat itself.

In separate letters, SEC Chair Lilia Bautista pointed out that the PSE and PCD facilitated or perpetuated alleged misdeeds in the trading of BW shares from January to October 1999.

Bautista said the stock exchange failed to substantially comply with a June 1998 SEC order requiring the augmentation of the bourse's compliance and surveillance manpower complement and upgrading of its surveillance system to monitor wash sales, insider trading, front running, matched orders and other manipulative device.

She also noted that the PSE relied too much on a trading band as a determinant of trading irregularities and as a trigger point for investigation, contributing to the failure to detect unusual trading early on.

Bautista added that the stock exchange did not coordinate its investigation of BW with the commission. It also failed to inform the SEC that it had information on the involvement of businessman Dante Tan in the alleged irregular trading of BW shares, she said.

The SEC could have started its investigation and possibly thwarted attempts by brokers not to disclose information about BW transactions, she said.

"Indeed, there are bitter lessons that we can learn from the BW incident, an experience which, at one time, threatened the viability of the local equity market. The above weaknesses have to be remedied, if they have not been addressed as yet, so as to prevent the occurrence of another BW case," Bautista said.

The implementation of the new PSE rules on unusual trading conditions—approved by the SEC—and stronger anti-manipulative provisions of the Securities Regulation Code and the law's implementing rules and regulations, together with an automated surveillance system, should give the PSE more flexibility to face and resolve in time any manipulative, fraudulent and deceptive schemes, Bautista said.

She underscored the need to ensure the independence of the compliance and surveillance group from the influence of trading participants and to foster greater regulatory cooperation between the SEC and PSE.

In the case of PCD, Bautista said the weaknesses in PCD's non-exchange trade facility, or EQTRADES, specifically the free use of the system and the non-identification of the beneficial owners of the buy and sell order in such trades, may have facilitated the price manipulation of BW.

These gaps, Bautista said, were further intensified by the regulatory mindset of PCD that it was only a service provider and nothing more.

"Under the SRC, the PCD, being a registered clearing agency acting as a depository, has the concomitant responsibility to comply with the provisions of the SRC, the rules and regulations thereunder and the PCD's own rules, and enforce compliance therewith," Bautista said. "Pursuant to this and consistent with the objective to prevent another BW case, it becomes imperative that PCD review its rules and procedures and strengthen its regulatory and supervisory authority over its members and participants. The review should not be confined to the EQTRADES facility but to include other aspect in the depository account," Bautista added.

BSP says decision on $500-M debt retirement plan out on Thursday

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas' policy-making Monetary Board will decide this week whether to issue bonds or tap a loan facility to raise some $500 million to $750 million that the government needs to retire expensive debts maturing in the next two years.

Sources said a loan, whether through a syndicate or a private placement, was becoming more and more attractive to the central bank.

A loan facility for the central bank's huge fund requirements will also help push the loan portfolio of the local banking system, helping reduce the number of bad loans in the system.

Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the Monetary Board would also decide on Thursday which of the more than 10 investment banks that submitted proposals would handle the central bank's borrowing.

The central bank has given these banks until Friday last week to tender their proposals.

Buenaventura said the central bank would choose the best price offer, whether through a bond issue or a loan facility.

A committee led by BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. will review and evaluate the offers before making a recommendation to the Monetary Board, he said.

"Although the price is an important consideration, we have to evaluate what is the most acceptable term and what is acceptable to potential investors," Tetangco said.

Buenaventura earlier disclosed that the central bank received proposals from Salomon Smith Barney, ABN Amro, Credit Suisse First Boston, Standard Chartered Bank, ING Barings, Deutsche Bank and JP Morgan Chase.

"Whether it would be loans or bonds, it would have the same basic terms, like five years, and the volume. We could go for as much as $750 million if the price is right," Buenaventura said.

The central bank said it was likely to prepay debts incurred almost a year ago and maturing in 2004. This borrowing was more expensive compared with those maturing in 2003, Buenaventura said.

The central bank borrowed some $750 million in March 2001 from 19 lenders and another $130 million in May 2001. Both had a three-year tenor and were used to settle maturing loans. The loans maturing in 2003 were cheaper and were not a priority for prepayment, said Buenaventura.

DBCC planning . . .

From page B18

billion to P440 billion, or even lower.

Government officials said last week that the deficit would keep within the P130 billion programmed for the full year.

The deficit target was set at P52.93 billion for the quarter, equivalent to 40.6 percent of the estimated deficit for 2002.

The government has said it has deliberately front-loaded spending in the first and second quarters of the year to boost the economy.

National Treasurer Sergio Edeza said he supported plans to review the government's fiscal targets to ensure that the deficit would be capped at P130 billion.

"We would have to look at the targets now so that in the coming months we would not exceed the deficit target," Edeza said.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said a review of the targets should be done seriously after next month.

SSS seen running out of funds . . .

From page B1

unrealistic to increase the rate drastically to 22 percent. So we are doing some simulations as to how we can increase the contributions gradually with the corresponding improvements in the members' benefits so we can make it (the adjustment) more acceptable to the public," said De la Paz.

For instance, she said the contributions could be increased within the next five years.

De la Paz warned that if the increase in rates would not be done soon, the fund might have to resort to "more stringent measures" like cutting down the benefits or increasing the retirement age of pensioners.

The SSS' funds dwindled as benefits paid to members increased by an average of 13.4 percent in the last 19 years until 2000 without the corresponding adjustment in the rate of the members' contributions.

Starting 1997, the growth of SSS' funds was way below expectations although investment income helped in meeting actuarial projections.

By 1999, the members' contributions amounting to P27.1 billion were already lower than the benefits paid by the fund worth P28.8 billion.

In year 2000, the SSS paid P33.9 billion in benefits versus contributions of P30.3 billion. Last year, the gap further expanded as the benefits paid amounted to P39 billion as against the contributions worth P31.4 billion.

De la Paz said many employers, including big businesses in Makati, might have failed to remit the contributions of their employees. "We may have to send some people to jail for them to start paying the contributions," she said.

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AYALA LIFE FIXED INCOME FUND, INC.

Notice of Annual Meeting of Stockholders

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Meeting of Stockholders of Ayala Life Fixed Income Fund ("ALFM") will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2002, at 3:00 p. m. at the Manila B Room of the Shangri-la Hotel, Ayala corner Makati Avenue, Makati City for the transaction of the following business:

1. Calling of meeting to order
2. Certification of Notice
3. Determination and Declaration of Quorum
4. Reading and approval of the minutes of the Annual Stockholders Meeting held on May 23, 2001.
5. Presentation and approval of the Annual Report and other reports of the Investment Manager
6. Approval and confirmation of all acts of the Board of Directors and of Management.
7. Election of Directors
8. The appointment of BPI Investment Management, Inc. as the Investment Manager of the Fund.
9. Appointment of External Auditors
10. Other Business
11. Adjournment

Only stockholders of record at the close of business on March 25, 2002, the record date and time fixed by the Board of Directors, are entitled to notice of, and to vote at said meeting.

For your convenience, admission to the meeting will be by identification cards only. If you are a stockholder of record and plan to attend, please bring the Voting Ticket attached to the Information Statement sent to you by mail/courier. The Voting Ticket will admit you to the meeting.

In order that your stock may be represented at the meeting in case you are not personally present, please complete, sign and date the Voting Ticket and return it promptly to the Office of the Corporate Secretary, 17th Floor, BPI Building, Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas St., Makati City.

For the Board of Directors,

(Sgd.) JO ANN B. EALA
BPI Investment Management, Inc.
As Service Administrator of ALFM

US consumers more upbeat in May

NEW YORK—US consumer sentiment in May surged to its highest level in 1-1/2 years, and US exports abroad rose in March, two reports showed Friday, bolstering the view that the economic recovery is firmly on track.

The data added to optimism that consumer spending, which underpins two-thirds of the US economy, would not let up in the months ahead and followed news this week showing retail sales bounded ahead in April.

"Consumer spending is still alive and well, and confidence seems to be gaining ground," said Peter Hooper, chief economist at Deutsche Bank Securities. "Certainly we're off to a pretty fast start on consumer spending in the second quarter."

The University of Michigan said its preliminary May consumer sentiment index rose to 96, a level not seen since December 2000 just before the economy began its sharp descent into recession. The index had fallen to 93 in April and May forecasts were for another small drop to 92.7.

Separately, the US Commerce Department said the trade deficit narrowed in March to $31.63 billion from $31.75 billion, slightly below forecasts, as exports rose for a third straight month. Imports also rose, but their value was inflated by higher oil prices.

Economists said the slight narrowing in the trade gap should result in a faster pace of gross domestic product growth in the first quarter, now seen as high as 6.5 percent, compared with the roaring 5.8 percent originally reported.

Stocks extended gains after the consumer sentiment data were released and ended slightly higher on the session. US Treasury securities sold off sharply as the report made it more likely the Federal Reserve will lift short-term interest rates in August from current four-decade lows.

After a red-hot growth rate in the first three months of this year, economists are feeling more optimistic about sustained strong growth rates. While inflation remains tame, analysts say the central bank will eventually have to raise rates to ward off future price pressures as the economy firms.

Interest-rate futures markets fully priced a quarter percentage point rise in the federal funds rate, currently at 1.75 percent, in August.

The Commerce Department said imports in March totaled $110.82 billion, up slightly from February, but more than $10 billion below the March 2001 level of $121.53.

The month-to-month change reflected slight increases in imports of industrial supplies and capital goods, offset by decreases in autos and auto parts and consumers goods.

Exports rose to $79.19 billion, up slightly from February but down more than $9 billion from the March 2001 level of $88.48 billion. Exports of capital goods, autos and auto parts rose slightly in March, while imports of foods, feeds and beverages and industrial supplies and materials fell.

For the first three months of 2002, the trade gap narrowed $3.7 billion from the same period in 2001 to $91.6 billion, as a $36.2 billion decline in imports outstripped a $32.5 billion drop in exports.

Analysts said the data showed US consumers were also doing their part to help lift the global economy through increased demand for imported goods.

"The US consumer is helping the global economy enter a recovery phase and that's what we're seeing in the stronger imports," said David Resler, chief economist at Nomura Securities International. "Our trading partners are benefiting as well as our domestic producers from the strong growth in consumer spending." *Reuters*

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With analysts under probe, researchers gain in stature

NEW YORK—With the credibility of Wall Street stock analysts in tatters, researchers at money management firms who've toiled in obscurity are finding their stature now is greater than ever before.

Mutual fund firms and other big investors, on what's known as the "buy side," have always relied heavily on their own analysts, and much less on Wall Street brokerage firms.

But amid mounting criticism that brokerage research is too bullish and misleading, the status of the in-house stock sleuths has risen still more.

"It's made buy side people like myself clamor for and get better research internally. We've increased our buy side exposure," said Benjamin Pace, who helps oversee $9 billion for Deutsche Bank Private Bank, which has added to its team of analysts as questions about Wall Street research mount.

"I'm even less reliant on sell-side analysts," he added. "Now I have a buy-side analyst staff that has no master and is not a slave."

Wall Street has been under growing scrutiny over allegations that juicy bonuses and pressure from higher ups have driven its analysts to issue rosy reports favorable to their firms' investment banking clients.

Fund companies and other asset managers lack those inherent conflicts. The bonuses dished out to fund analysts depend mainly on their stock-picking ability, not whether they can steer lucrative investment banking contracts to their firms.

"On the buy side, you have what is a natural alignment of interests between analysts and investors," said Mercer Bullard, head of advocacy group Fund Democracy.

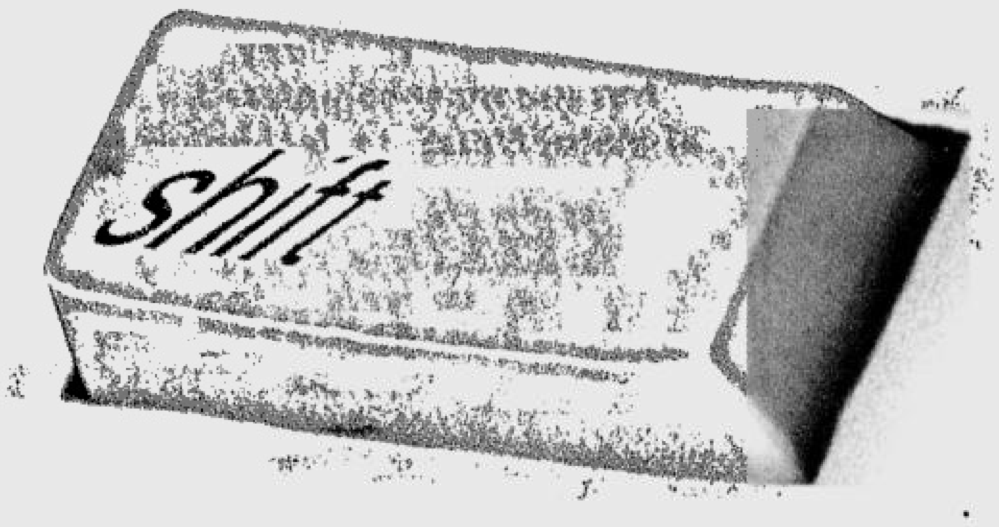
It's a more straightforward arrangement than brokerage house research, Mercer said, since the fund management firms' researchers "are praising stocks they hold and criticizing stocks they're selling."

Wall Street analysts, who wielded a great deal of influence during the bull market of the late 1990s and early 2000 and watched their compensation packages skyrocket to rock-star levels, have become the industry's pariahs these days.

New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer recently charged Merrill Lynch & Co. Inc., the biggest US brokerage, with issuing wildly optimistic and biased research to woo investment banking business. Spitzer has said he hopes to reach a settlement with the firm by next week.

Then the US Securities and Exchange Commission last week approved new rules to force stock analysts to reveal more about their ties to companies they research in a bid to prevent them from touting shares they don't truly believe in. The rules do not affect portfolio managers and fund analysts.

Wall Street analyst pay still makes fund firm salaries look paltry by comparison. The median compensation for seasoned analysts at big Wall Street investment firms was $700,000 last year and only $275,000 for their buy-side counterparts, according to a recent Association for Investment Management and Research survey. The upper echelon of Wall Street players, meanwhile, made millions each last year, the report showed. *Reuters*



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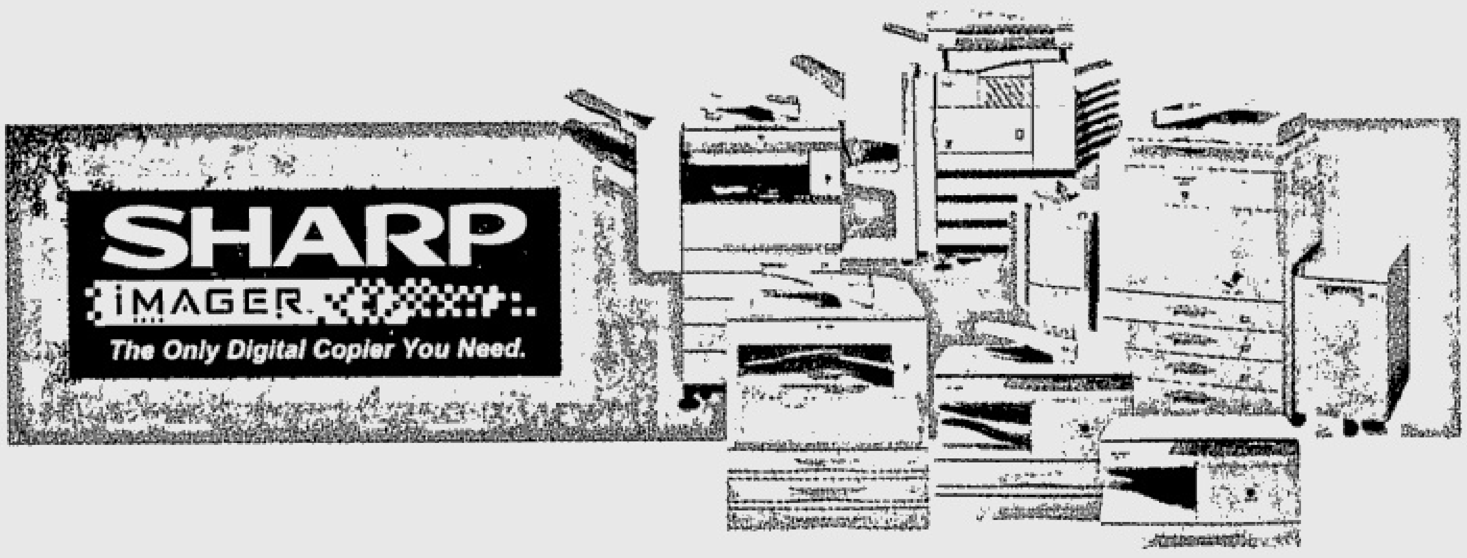

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Report says Opec won't raise output

NICOSIA—The Opec oil cartel is unlikely to raise production at a ministerial meeting on June 26 unless current market fundamentals change, the Middle East Economic Survey reports in its Monday edition.

"MEES soundings indicate that Opec is unlikely to raise output based on current market fundamentals," the industry newsletter says, underlining the cartel's determination to act on fundamentals and not only high prices.

"But it is still too early for a final judgement pending a more up-to-date supply/demand picture by mid-June."

"While Opec will be concerned at price rises based on speculation, MEES soundings indicate that available supply/demand data are seen to provide no reason for the organization to raise output at the ministerial meeting," in Vienna.

"Opec analysts will look particularly at OECD inventory data in the run-up to the meeting but there is no talk at this stage of a production quota change," the Cyprus-based weekly says.

Oil prices fell on Friday as the prospect of increased global supplies, along with the recent easing of tensions in the Middle East, saw the market back further away from eight-month highs set earlier in the week.

Reference Brent North Sea crude for July delivery fell 30 cents to $26.08 a barrel by late afternoon. *AFP*

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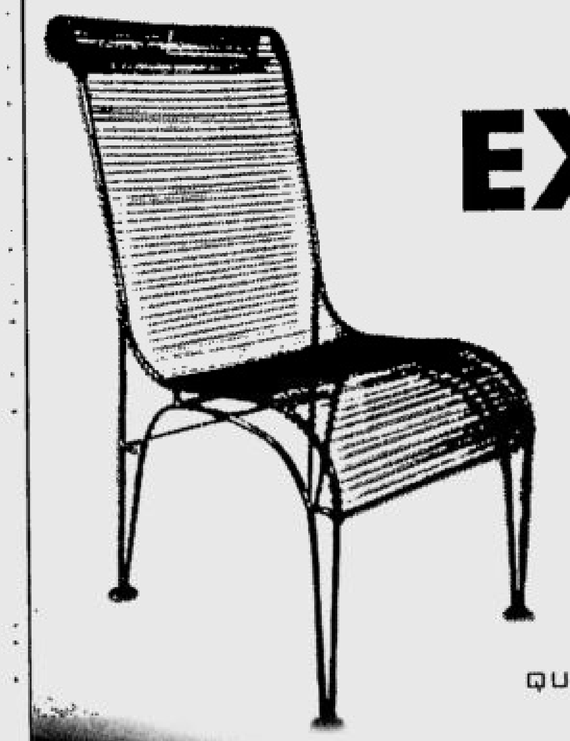
Pitt met with Xerox during probe

WASHINGTON—Acting against agency legal advice, Securities and Exchange Commission chair Harvey Pitt met with the head of Xerox Corp. while the company was the subject of an SEC investigation, The Washington Post reported on Saturday.

Citing "sources familiar with the meeting," the Post said Pitt met last December with Xerox CEO Anne Mulcahy while the SEC was investigating the company for possible accounting fraud.

While Mulcahy was told before the meeting that the topic of the investigation was off-limits, she brought it up anyway, the newspaper said. Pitt,

PITT/ B11



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Fed seeks shift in role

WASHINGTON—The Federal Reserve on Friday unveiled a major shift in the way it lends money to the nation's banks, proposing to charge them more for the privilege but making it less onerous to get loans.

Private economists predicted the change would have no impact on consumer or business borrowing rates but should help smooth out volatility in the massive $60 billion daily market for short-term lending between banks.

Currently, banks who go to the Fed's discount window are able to get loans that are about a half percentage point below the Fed's target for the federal funds rate, the interest that commercial banks charge each other for loans.

Under the proposal, the Fed would take away that break and instead charge banks using the discount window a rate one full percentage point above the Fed funds rate.

Currently, the Fed has set the funds rate at a 40-year low of 1.75 percent while the Fed's discount rate is set at 1.25 percent. Under this proposal, the discount rate would be set initially at 2.75 percent.

Analysts said the switch was unlikely to make much difference on the rates banks charge on consumers and business loans because discount window borrowing only amounts to about $100 million daily, a tiny fraction of the $55 billion to $60 billion in loans extended among banks in the federal funds market.

Banks borrow at the federal funds rate when they have a short-term need to boost their cash reserves to meet the Fed's reserve requirements, which generally state that big banks must keep an amount of cash available for withdrawals equal to 10 percent of their deposits.

If a bank is short on that amount, it borrows the money from a bank that has excess reserves.

It is through the management of bank reserves that the central bank sets monetary policy, moving short-term interest rates higher to slow economic activity and lower when it wants to stimulate demand.

Fed Governor Edward Gramlich said that the higher discount rate would bring Fed operations more in line with how other nations' central banks handle direct bank lending.

"We are switching to a routine that is common around the world," Gramlich said in a conference call with reporters. "This does not involve a change in the stance of monetary policy."

While the Fed sets a target for the funds rate, that rate can spike dramatically on certain days given demand for resources. By providing banks with a more streamlined procedure for obtaining discount window loans directly from the Fed, Gramlich said the hope is to smooth out some of the day-to-day volatility.

Private economists generally applauded the move as good way to streamline lending processes and agreed that it should have no impact on consumer rates, such as banks' prime lending rate, which has moved in recent years in lockstep with Fed changes in the funds rate.

"It is the federal funds rate that counts and these changes don't affect that," said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poor's in New York.

Keith Legget, a senior economist at the American Bankers Association, said his group was caught by surprise by the change and would need more time to study the proposal before commenting in detail.

Throughout the Fed's history, the discount window has served as the way the Fed can serve as a lender of last resort to banks in trouble.

But Fed officials stressed that in normal times such loans make up only a small part of discount window borrowing with the vast bulk of the loans going to banks that face a one-day cash crunch for unexpected reasons. Currently, the Fed has no loans to banks that can't obtain financing through regular channels.

The Fed proposal also raised the possibility that the central bank could quickly lower the higher charge for discount window borrowing during an emergency.

The Fed immediately after Sept. 11 invited banks to make liberal use of the discount window and borrowing levels hit record amounts as the central bank struggled to make sure the terrorist attacks did not disrupt the nation's financial system.

The Fed switch would mark the biggest change in Fed borrowing operations in about two decades, since Congress in the early 1980s opened the Fed's discount window to all financial institutions, not just banks who are members of the Federal Reserve system.

The Fed proposal could be revised before the central bank decides whether to implement the proposed changes after a 90-day comment period.

Food police slams pizza: too much fat, too much salt

WASHINGTON—A non-profit consumer group which rates the healthfulness of the US diet has slammed one of the most popular American menu items—pizza—as a belt-buster packed in sodium, fat and carbohydrates.

According to a report released late Friday by the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) pizza is a $30 billion-a-year industry in the United States, and is often seen as a healthy alternative to traditional fast-food fare like hotdogs and hamburgers.

But the CSPI determined that the typical two-slice serving of plain, unadorned cheese pizza packs about a half a day's worth of saturated fat.

Two slices of one popular brand, Pizza Hut's Stuffed Crust Pepperoni Lover's pizza, deliver more than 800 calories and about a day's worth of saturated fat and sodium, the group said.

The CSPI found that typical slice of pizza is generally less healthy than a fast food hamburger like a McDonald's "Big Mac."

But the group's researchers noted that while consumers generally order just one burger, most don't stop at one slice of pizza.

The single best thing you can do to improve your pizza is to get it with less cheese, according to the study.

"More cheese on your pizza means more crust in your arteries," CSPI nutritionist and study director Jayne Hurley said in a press release.

"The saturated fat in the carpet of cheese is one of pizza's biggest problems—adding fatty meats just makes matters worse," she said. "But any pizzeria worth its sauce should happily accommodate a request for half the cheese."

The group also recommended vegetable toppings and avoiding a recent popular pizza innovation "stuffed crust," slices that injects cheese into the pizza's crust.

"You need cheese stuffed into a pizza crust like you need reverse liposuction to force more fat under your skin," says Hurley.

CSPI analyzed 15 kinds of pizza from 36 pizzerias in Washington, Chicago, and Los Angeles and included company information from four major chains, Pizza Hut, Domino's, Little Caesars, and Papa John's.

The pizza study is the latest in a series of CSPI studies that have examined the nutritional content of movie theater popcorn, Chinese, Mexican, and Italian restaurants, as well as steakhouses, sandwich shops, and the fare at food courts in shopping malls.

The group's pizza study is published in the June issue of its Nutrition Action Healthletter and in a new book, "Restaurant Confidential." AFP

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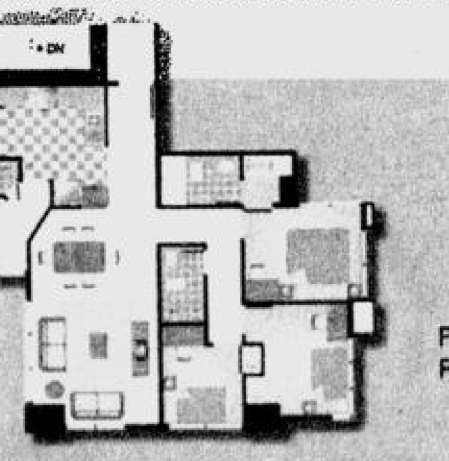

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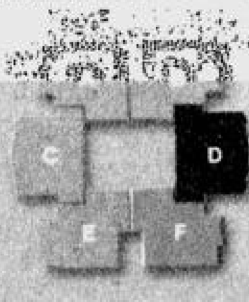

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Pitt met with Xerox . . .

From page B10

according to the Post, listened but did not respond. Xerox requested the meeting, the sources said.

The report may intensify pressure on Pitt, who has been under criticism for alleged conflicts of interest. He already has come under fire for an April 26 meeting with the chief of accounting giant KPMG, a former client when Pitt was an attorney before heading the SEC. Public interest group Common Cause has said Pitt should step down because of the KPMG meeting.

Reuters

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- Inside Photoshop 7.0
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- How to Make Effective Newsletters and Other Print Materials

June 6, 2002 Thursday
- PDF Workflow for Prepress
- From Pagemaker to InDesign 2.0
- Color Management & Scanning Techniques
- Web Animation Essentials, Tools, and Techniques
- The Making of Web Videos

June 7, 2002 Friday
- Real World Freehand 10
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Mutual Funds in the Philippines: Ready for Take-off

The concept of a mutual fund is straightforward enough. In a mutual fund, various individuals put together their money in a single pot. This pot of money will then be monitored, managed and invested in a diverse portfolio of securities by professional investment managers according to the investment objectives of those who put their money in a mutual fund.

There is strength in numbers, and mutual funds give investors the opportunity to build a diverse portfolio of securities much faster than they could if they were to do it by themselves, using solely their own funds.

In the United States, the growth of the mutual fund industry over the last 20 years has been credited for the sustained growth of the American capital markets, as well as for their resilient economy. With pooled money available, investment, industry and government units are able to access the funds they need to start or expand businesses and render public services.

According to the Investment Company Institute, the national association of the American investment company industry, the combined net assets of over 10,000 US mutual funds reached US$6.920 trillion in February 2002. Counting approximately 83 million individual investors, half of all households in the US own at least one mutual fund.

Here at home, mutual funds can be considered relatively new. There are less than 20 mutual funds in the Philippines and the oldest among them have not even counted a dozen years in the industry.

However, the entry of dynamic new mutual funds in the Philippine market allows small investors to slowly educate themselves and discover the benefits they offer.

For example, the Philippine Web site of Sun Life, www.sunlifefunds.com, devotes pages upon pages to instruct the public on the nature of mutual fund investments and how they can be best used to secure one's future.

The Sun Life Prosperity Funds, a "family of mutual funds" is composed of the Prosperity Bond Fund, the Prosperity Balanced Fund and the Prosperity Philippine Equity Fund.

As the names suggest, the bond fund is invested in government and corporate debt securities, the equity fund buys shares of stock of Philippine corporations, and the balanced fund consists of debt securities and stocks.

Sun Life Prosperity Funds is considered a family of mutual funds because it allows investors to transfer their placements between the Sun Life Prosperity Funds without being subject to any charges or fees. Other mutual funds, while offered by the same company or investment group, charge an entry or an exit fee every time placements are moved from one fund to another.

Sun Life Financial Executive Vice President for Asian Operations Douglas C. Henck predicts a steady growth in mutual funds, on the basis of a more stable economic and political environment. "The Philippines is ready to support the mutual fund industry. The Philippine mutual fund market will grow and I think it will grow faster than the markets in America and we expect to be the leader in this market. It's a good business to be in and we're going to help the Philippines and the Filipino consumer to grow with us in that market," Henck said.

The Sun Life Prosperity Funds are professionally managed by investment managers, most of whom are Chartered Financial Analysts. Launched only in April 2000, the Sun Life Prosperity Funds already have P1.8 billion worth of assets under management.

It is also interesting to note that the first mutual fund offered in the US was from Massachusetts Financial Services, a member of the Sun Life Financial group of companies. The fund grew from US$50,000 in assets in 1924 to US$392,000 in assets the following year.

And while we are still a long way from reaching the mature demand in the US which has led to an assortment of mutual funds – stock funds, hybrid funds, taxable bond funds, municipal bond funds, taxable money market funds, tax-free money market funds – the rapid growth of the Sun Life Prosperity Funds can only be taken as material proof justifying Henck's bullish outlook for the mutual fund industry in the Philippines.

To find out if the Sun Life Prosperity Funds suit your particular investment needs and personal disposition, call (632) 849-9999.

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2. Central Visayas	Ramiro "Spines" Espina	Unit 6 Galleria Fuente, Mango Ave. Cebu City	(032) 2531532 / 2532547
3. Eastern Visayas	Renato Roldan	Rm. 305, 3/F Dynasty Square Bldg. Zamora St., Tacloban City, Leyte	(053) 3253730
4. Mindanao	Julio Cruz	2nd Flr. La Fontana Di Remedios Arcade Bolton St., Davao City	(082) 3052813

PHILIPPINE CARABAO CENTER
Department of Agriculture

INVITATION TO BID

The Philippine Carabao Center invites interested suppliers to bid for the supply and delivery at Philippine Carabao Center National Gene Pool and Headquarters, Water Buffalo and Beef Cattle Improvement Project (WBBCIP) CLSU Cpd., Maharlika Highway, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija described as follows:

1 Unit of Tractor with Canopy, 90hp, 4WD

Prequalification requirements can be secured from Engr. Eduardo P. Dalusong, Procurement Section, Philippine Carabao Center National Genepool and Headquarters, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija and Mr. Rogel M. Dela Cuesta, Philippine Carabao Center Manila Liaison Office, 5th Floor, DCIEC Bldg., NIA Cpd., EDSA, Quezon City starting on **May 27, 2002**. Last day of submission of prequalification documents will be on **May 31, 2002.**

Clarifications and other inquiries may be addressed during the pre-bidding conference on **June 7, 2002**, 10:00 a.m. at Philippine Carabao Center Manila Liaison Office, 5th Floor, DCIEC Bldg., NIA Cpd., EDSA, Quezon City.

Sealed bids shall be received by the Office of the Executive Director not later than **June 14, 2002**, 10:00 a.m. at the same address.

The Philippine Carabao Center reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any formality in such bids, and to accept bids as may be considered most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) **LIBERTADO C. CRUZ**
Executive Director

(PDI - May 18 & 20, 2002)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of the Interior and Local Government
National Police Commission
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE
PNPCS Canvass and Award Committee
Camp Crame, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID

The **PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE COMPUTER SERVICE BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE** invites all interested **PNP Accredited Suppliers/Manufacturers** to participate in the bidding of 1 (one) Lot Equipment in the **Expansion of CPD Command and Control Facility** which consists of the following:

a. Computer Hardware/Software
b. Communications Equipment
c. Network Equipment/Installation
d. Office Furnitures/Fixtures

The detailed specification of these products will be released during the Pre-bid Conference scheduled on **Wednesday, May 29, 2002** at 10:00 o'clock in the morning at the Conference Room of the PNP Computer Service in Camp Crame, Quezon City.

For more details, please call up PCI Lampa at Tel. Nos. 721-8565 or 723-0401 loc. 4215/4315

(Sgd.) **PSSUPT CLAUDIO C CABREROS**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – May 18, 19 & 20, 2002)

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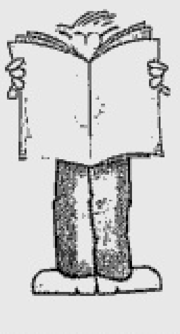

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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Labor and Employment
Overseas Workers Welfare Administration

RE-INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) invites all interested bidders to apply for eligibility screening and if subsequently found eligible, to bid for the performance of STRUCTURAL VERIFICATION TEST on the OWWA Center Building. Total approved budget for the project is Php 1,170,000.00.

The works to be performed in providing structural verification tests, consists of:

01. **Soil Investigation** (Standard Penetration Test, Determination of Water content, Atterberg Limits Test, Particle Size Analysis and Permeability Test)
02. **Destructive Testing** (Chipping-off, Concrete Coring and Compressive Strength Testing, Steel Sampling and Tensile Strength Testing)
03. **Non-Destructive Testing** (Rebound Hammer Test and Covermeter Test)
04. **Miscellaneous Exploratory Works**

Prospective bidder opting to bid for partial or one (1) or two (2) items only will automatically disqualified.

Related bidding activities are as follows:

a. Submission of Letter of Intent	June 03, 2002
b. Submission of Requirements For Eligibility	June 05, 2002
c. Notice of Eligibility (eligibility/ineligibility)	June 11, 2002
d. Distribution of Bid Documents	June 14, 2002
e. Site Inspection	June 18, 2002
f. Pre-Bid Conference	June 20, 2002
g. Submission and Opening of Bids	June 28, 2002

The OWWA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and accept the offer most advantageous to the Administration. OWWA assumes no obligation for whatever losses that may be incurred by the bidder in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

For more information please call at phone number 833-1013 or 833-1010.

(Sgd.) **MR. RUSTICO SM. DELA FUENTE**
Chairperson, OWWA PBAC

(PDI--May 19, 20 & 21, 2002)

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

NOTICE OF DISPOSITION

Twelfth Offering

The National Housing Authority (NHA) is accepting bids for the sale of eighty three (83) residential lots in Monterrazas Village, Brgy. Tuding, Itogon, Benguet with areas ranging from 283 to 901 square meters and base prices ranging from P350.00 to P4,500.00 per square meter under credit terms.

Interested parties may secure the bid documents for a non-refundable fee of P200.00 from the NHA Project Office located at the D'Castellamonte Bldg., No. 12 Otek St., Baguio City.

SCHEDULE: The submission of the Pre-qualification requirements will be received during office hours from **May 16, 2002 to June 19, 2002.** A pre-bid conference will be held on **June 13, 2002** at 2:00 p.m. Sealed offers will be received from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on **June 20, 2002** which will be opened at 2:00 p.m. of the same day. All transactions will be held/entertained at the NHA Baguio Project Office.

The NHA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, call off this tender prior to bid acceptance and call for new tender under amended rules, as may be deemed advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) **EDGARDO D. PAMINTUAN**
General Manager

(PDI - May 16 & 20, 2002)

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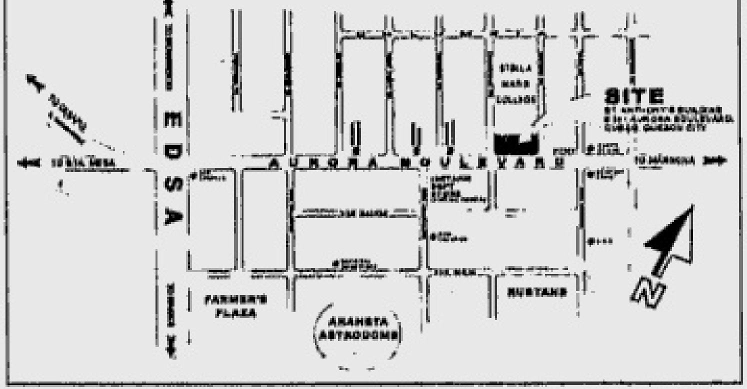

GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM
GSIS CEBU BRANCH OFFICE
City Savings Bank Bldg. Osmeña Blvd.
P. Burgos Street, Cebu City
IN-HOUSE BIDDING COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND TO BID

The GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM invites all interested contractors to pre-qualify and to bid for the CONSTRUCTION of the PROPOSED THREE-STOREY GSIS CEBU BRANCH OFFICE BUILDING within the 4927 square-meter property of the GSIS along Leon Kilat St., Cebu City.

Interested bidders with Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) license of "AAA" for general building and classification of at least Large "A" for building may secure standard Pre-qualification Forms from the Office of the Chief, Administrative Division, GSIS Cebu Branch Office at Room 204 City Savings Bank Building, Osmeña Blvd. cor. P. Burgos St., Cebu City with Tel. No. 256-1356, upon submission of Letter of Intent. Pre-qualification documents must be returned duly accomplished to the same office not later than May 31, 2002.

Pre-qualified bidders shall be informed by mail or fax message of Pre-Bid Conferences and Bid Schedules. All particulars relative to the pre-qualification, bidding and award shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulation of PD 1594, as amended in May 24, and July 5, 2000.

THE GSIS IN-HOUSE BIDDING COMMITTEE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY DEFECTS OR INFORMALITIES OF THE BIDS RECEIVED, TO ACCEPT THE BID MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GSIS AND DOES NOT GUARANTEE THAT AN AWARD WILL BE MADE. THE DECISION OF THE GSIS IN-HOUSE BIDDING COMMITTEE IN THIS REGARD SHALL BE FINAL AND BINDING.

(Sgd.) **MERIAN M. CASTELLANO**
Branch Manager

(PDI - May 7, 14 & 20, 2002)

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Economic slump leaves US region in survival battle

SEATTLE, Washington—As the US economy begins to rebound from a biting recession, its Pacific Northwest region, one of the motors of its 1990s growth, is still battling some of America's worst economic woes.

In the final years of the 20th century, Seattle and the northwest helped puff up the booming US economy with the help of major traditional and high-tech industrial giants based in the region.

Aircraft monolith Boeing, software giant Microsoft and online book-sellers Amazon helped spur the US economy to unprecedented heights as a bubble formed around the much-touted high-tech and online industries.

Invigorated by the tremendous growth and innovation of the Internet revolution, led by Amazon and high-tech and bio-technological start-ups, the region rode high.

High-tech giants pumped new money into arts institutions, public works, education and research as workers and professionals flocked to the region.

But when that bubble burst in 2000, it broke hard, sending Seattle and the northwest from their fashionable peak into a long and deep period of economic gloom. Seattle turned out to be on the cutting edge of the downturn too.

Thousands of jobs were shed with the demise of high-tech start-ups as the gilt rubbed off the global Internet revolution and the plunging stock market erased billions of dollars in tech assets.

Then Boeing, for decades the area's biggest private employer with 80,000 workers and generating upwards of $30 billion in primary revenue last year shifted its headquarters to Chicago.

"The state of Washington's economy stopped growing at the end of August 2001," the University of Washington's economics fellow, Paul Sommers told AFP.

Last year, the area lost more than 65,000 jobs, nearly twice the projected number of 35,000.

The Sept. 11 terror attacks on US targets, which badly dented the national economy and notably its aviation industry, dealt a further blow to the region when Boeing slashed 30,000 jobs, including 14,629 in the Northwest.

Then the decline in the airline business following the airborne strikes on the US east coast erased the fall tourist season in Seattle, sending the service industry into free fall.

The Puget Sound region, headquarters for Boeing's commercial aircraft manufacturing, took a particularly hard hit, losing 7,000 jobs.

Those cuts were particularly painful because each Boeing job is tied to 3.7 others in the area including workers and restaurant and hotel employees, according to Dick Conway, co-author of "The Puget Sound Economic Forecaster."

"It may take up to three years for those workers to feel the full impact of Boeing's cuts," he said.

Unemployment in Washington state reached 6.8 percent in March—down from a peak of 7.6 percent in January—against a national average of 5.7 percent.

And the massive layoffs at Boeing will continue to be a drag on economic numbers until June when the company has scheduled them to ease.

On the trade front, things are not much brighter. Washington is the most trade-dependent US state, but its waterfronts are now quiet.

As Japan, the state's biggest trade partner, struggles to make the tough changes needed to shake years of recession, experts do not expect much growth in exports to the beleaguered US northeast or a boost to local ports.

In 2000, two-way trade between Washington and Japan totaled $26.9 billion, according to Chang Mook Sohn, head of the Office of the Forecast Council.

"When I say recovery . . . that simply means the contraction will recede; that does not necessarily mean we will come back strongly," said Mook, the state's top economist. "The recovery will be painfully slow this time."

But while an immediate fix is not likely, the overall outlook is good, experts said. *AFP*

AOL to lay off marketing staff

NEW YORK—Internet provider America Online, whose parent company AOL Time Warner recently posted the biggest quarterly loss in US corporate history, will lay off 100 of its 725 marketing employees, the Wall Street Journal reported Friday.

AOL's marketing division is in Dulles, Virginia, outside of Washington, and New York.

AOL Time Warner executives apologized to shareholders Thursday at the company's annual meeting for the company's lackluster performance.

Last month, the media company reported a $54.2-billion first-quarter loss. *AFP*

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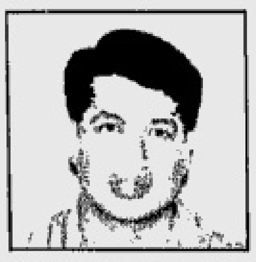

Notice is hereby given to the public that MR. **SONNY V. SANTOS**, whose picture appears above, is no longer connected with **STARKING, INC.** since May 20, 2002.

Any representation and/or transaction entered into by this person on or after this date is no longer authorized and shall not be honored by the company.

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(PDI-May 13, 20 & 27, 2002)

Notice is hereby given that the rights of the spouses PERFECTO B. ESPINO and EPIFANIA E. FUNG-ESPINO to the deed of conditional sale over a parcel of land (Lot 11 Block 59) situated at soldier's hills, Muntinlupa City, Metro Manila, Philippines, have been assigned to Edna Victoria E. Fung by virtue of a deed of assignment of rights and waiver executed by Epifania E. Fung-Espino and heirs of Perfecto B. Espino (per Doc. No. 2638, Page No. 28, Book No. VI, Series of 2002 of the Notarial Register of Notary Public Romeo C. Cruz of Quezon City, Metro Manila.PDI-May 13,20, 27 2002

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Sps. Orlando and Edna Malan was extrajudicially settled to Sps. Ricardo and Anita Malan per Doc. No. 7810; Page No. 63; Book No. XVI; Series of 2002 before Notary Public Felipe I. Iledan Jr. of Makati City
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the way,
the truth
and
the life.
No one
comes
to the
Father
except
through
Me.
John 14:6

ESTELA S. DE JESUS VDA. DE LEON

widow of **Dr. Jose V. de Leon**
of Baliuag, Bulacan

Joined her Creator peacefully on May 18, 2002
at the age of 85.

Her loving children **Jessie** (†) & **Adoracion**, and **Dr. Alberto**; grandchildren **Christian, Trinidad & Noel**, and **Narcisa & Hermie**, great granddaughter **Jessica**, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at her residence in Cagayan Valley Road, Baliuag, Bulacan.

Interment will be on Tuesday, May 21, 2002 after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at the Baliuag Catholic Cemetery, Baliuag, Bulacan.

JOSE H. AGUILAR

December 30, 1934 - May 17, 2002
Founder & Chairman, CIMELEC Industrial Construction Inc.

His loving wife **Cipriana**; son **Leonardo**; daughter-in-law **Cecille**; granddaughter **Blanca** and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the family residence at Lot 21 Block 2,
Pleasant Village Manggahan, Pasig City.

On Wednesday, May 22, he will be flown to Cebu City.

Rejoice with us that he has come home to the Father.

"Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

FELICIDAD MIRANDA DE QUIROZ

of Imus, Cavite

December 28, 1926 - May 16, 2002

Peacefully joined her Creator and Lord
on May 16, 2002.

Her bereaved husband **TEOFILO**; children **ROMULO & ROSA LUSTRO, OFELIA & ALEX REYES, EVA, ROSNELA & BRYAN HARDESTY, EMY, FLORIAN & NORMAN FANER**; grandchildren **VINCENT, ISABEL, RYAN, RINA, GABRIEL, BRANDON, MELVIN & CLARISSA**; sister **LUZ & PEPE ORCULLO**; sisters-in-law **ZENY SANTOS, AMELIA & DR. ALFREDO CASINO**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at No. 87 Palico Street, Imus, Cavite.

Interment will be on Wednesday, May 22, 2002 at Imus Cemetery after the 2:30 PM Mass at Imus Cathedral.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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MESSAGE OF THANKS
DEATH ANNIVERSARY
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"You will be forever in our hearts Jon"

ORLANDO "JON" ORDOÑEZ, JR.

Has peacefully joined our Creator
on May 17, 2002. He was 38.

His bereaved wife **Mari**, and son **Rafael**, his mother **Mila**, brothers **Patrick** and **Roberto**, sister **Jennie**, in-laws, relatives and friends request the pious readers to offer prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains now lie in state at the Arlington East The Garden Chapels in Pasig City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, May 22, 2002 at the Pasig Catholic Cemetery.

Our Dearly Beloved Papa

YU KHENG CHIAU

Peacefully joined his Creator on May 17, 2002
at the age of 82.

His loving children **Richard & Santa, Heidi & Buddy, Diczen & Nelia, Adam & Cin-cin**; grandchildren **Richie, Sheila, An-an & Mike, Bebe, Nikki, Michael, Sonny & Annabelle**; great granddaughter **Jasmin**; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapel, Sucat Road, Parañaque.

Interment/Cremation will be on Tuesday, May 21, 2002, 10:00 AM at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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INFOTECH

Editor **Leo Magno**

Senate not keen on ICT dept

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva
INQ7.net

CONVINCING senators to support the law creating the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) would likely pose a challenge for its proponents, Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., co-author of the E-commerce Law, said in an interview.

The Senate, which Magsaysay described as focused on passing economic-related bills this year, might not be too keen on passing legislation creating a new information and communications technology agency.

"(DICT) is not important now because it creates another bureaucracy," the senator said, adding that even his bills related to Internet security and privacy and convergence were shelved to make way for more important legislation.

Claro Parlade, lawyer and co-chair of the legal and regulatory committee of the Information Technology and E-commerce Council (ITECC), however, remains confident that the law would be passed this year.

"We will change (the senator's) mind," Parlade said, in reaction to Magsaysay's statement.

Early this year, Parlade said the IT super body would be up and running by mid-2002 but admitted the technical working group has yet to find co-authors from the Senate.

Senator Magsaysay was once among those being eyed as a possible co-author for the law.

In a separate interview, Virgilio Peña, executive director of ITECC, noted the DICT bill would eventually find support in the Senate because it is one of the priority pieces of legislation being pushed by Malacañang.

"When the draft bill is passed at the House, it would be easy to find support at the Senate," the government official said.

The House of Representative committee on government reorganization will meet Tuesday to discuss further improvements on its version of the DICT draft bill, following earlier consultations with the private sector and government agencies set to be absorbed by the new department.

Representatives Frank Perez II, Roberto Cajes, Monico Puentevella, Joseph Santiago, Ma. Theresa Defensor and Simeon Kintanar are authors of the bill, now known as the "Department of Information and Communications Technology Act of 2001."

Similar to Malaysia's Ministry of Energy, Communications and Multimedia, the ICT department is envisioned as the government's "super body" mandated to oversee initiatives and activities in information and communications technology in the country. It will also be the executive body formulating policy directions in ICT.

A working group under the House committee on government reorganization consolidated several bills in Congress late last year.

Since the 1990s, various proposed bills had been filed at the House including those by Santiago, Defensor, Kintanar, Perez and Catanduanes Gov. Leandro Verceles Jr.

Verceles was the first lawmaker to file a bill in Congress to create the ICT "super agency" in 1992.

The ICT department bill involve consolidating various functions of separate agencies, including the National Computer Center (which is under the Department of Science and Technology), the Department of Transportation and Communications, and the National Telecommunications Commission, according to proponents of the bill.

The new ICT body will be the "primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, regulating and administrative entity of the executive branch of the government on the promotion, development and regulation of the national information infrastructure and the required ICT resources."

It will also oversee all government initiatives in IT including the National Information Technology Action Agenda for the 21st Century, the Government Information Systems Plan, and the National Program and Strategy for the promotion of e-commerce in the country.

The DICT will also be the body implementing the RPWeb project, an ambitious plan to Internet-enable all government agencies in the country.

BRAINSHARE ONLINE

Putting pictures into Word shapes

By Jerry Liao

POWERTIPS

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3. Position your mouse over the shape and right click your mouse button.
4. Choose Format Autoshape.
5. Select Color and Lines / click on Color dropdown arrow and choose Fill effects.
6. Click on Picture tab then click on Select Picture button.
7. Choose the picture you want to use for your shape then click OK.

For more tips, visit http://www.brainshare.com.ph

For your comments, questions and suggestions, e-mail us at infochat@mozcom.com

Computer clubhouse keeps children drug-free

By Leo Magno

EAST Palo Alto, California—10-year-old Jalil Jackson grabs the microphone, snaps up a tune and records improvised rap lyrics into the PC. A few computers away, 11-year-old Francis Jandres finishes his Photoshop masterpiece, with his picture on the foreground and a fancy sports car at the back.

A couple of kids monkeying around with the computer? Hardly. For outside the room of technology where the two boys would seem to be wasting the day away, harsh realities of drugs and gang wars await them. Jalil and Francis are actually the lucky, productive ones in a world where juvenile delinquency is waiting to pounce on the idle child.

The two boys live in East Palo Alto, in a town Americans call "underserved." In the Philippines, one might refer to their hometown as "depressed." It is home to drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, gang wars, theft and rape.

Yet, within this jungle of despair lies an oasis of technology where the youth can call sanctuary from the temptations, which lead children to the dark side.

Jalil and Francis are two of the kids who regularly go to the Intel Computer Clubhouse, located at the Boys and Girls Club in East Palo Alto. There are other Intel Computer Clubhouses in California, including those in Menlo Park and Redwood City. But this particular clubhouse is the one where Jalil and Francis take shelter in.

The clubhouse provides a creative after-school environment where underserved youth are encouraged to "learn by doing" through computer-generated art, music and video. They design their own animations, build their own webpages and program their own games—a lot better than doing drugs or getting beaten up in the streets.

The Intel Computer Clubhouse stems from a successful learning model that was created in 1993 by the Boston Museum of Science and the MIT Media Laboratory. It has since been pollinated by other local organizations throughout the United States, germinated by the Intel seed fund and managed by local groups through supplementary funding. There are now 56 computer clubhouses in the United States. Elsewhere in the world, computer clubhouses are being developed in China, India, Taiwan and the Philippines.

In the East Palo Alto clubhouse, a majority of the children belongs to ethnic groups. Jalil is of African-American descent while Francis is of Hispanic origins, but these do not stop them from furthering their interests in computers and serving a global audience.

"I wanna be a rap artist," says Jalil, who says his stage name will be "Li'l Shorty." He then shows off a crumpled picture of his aunt standing beside rap singer Snoop Doggy Dogg. Jalil then prints out a Photoshop-constructed poster of himself, standing on top of the world with the stylized logo "Li'l Shorty" at the bottom.

"I did this by myself," Jalil says proudly, referring to the poster. "I even got some songs recorded," he says, and plays a tune he earlier recorded on the PC.

Like most of the other children here, Jalil's parents leave him at the clubhouse in the morning, to be picked up later after work.

"My dad helps mothers how to take care of their babies, like the breast thing," Jalil says. "He helps moms about breast-feeding. My mom's a nurse. She drops me off at the bus stop, then I take a bus ride here. Then dad picks me up at about 7."

"My mom babysits," says Francis. "My dad cleans the rooms of buildings where old people live. I stay here at the clubhouse after school, then dad picks me up."

Francis, who wants to be a lawyer when he grows up, says he's aware that other kids do drugs in the streets, and that he's happy to be in the clubhouse where he's learning about computers and the Internet.

"A lot of kids here turned their lives around," says Shaddrea Briggs, director of technology of the clubhouse in the Boys and Girls Club. "In this neighborhood there's a lot of gang wars and drug problems, so the kids chose to be here. Like Jalil. He could be the next Michael Jackson. We let him sing and write his own songs. He's an all-around entertainer."

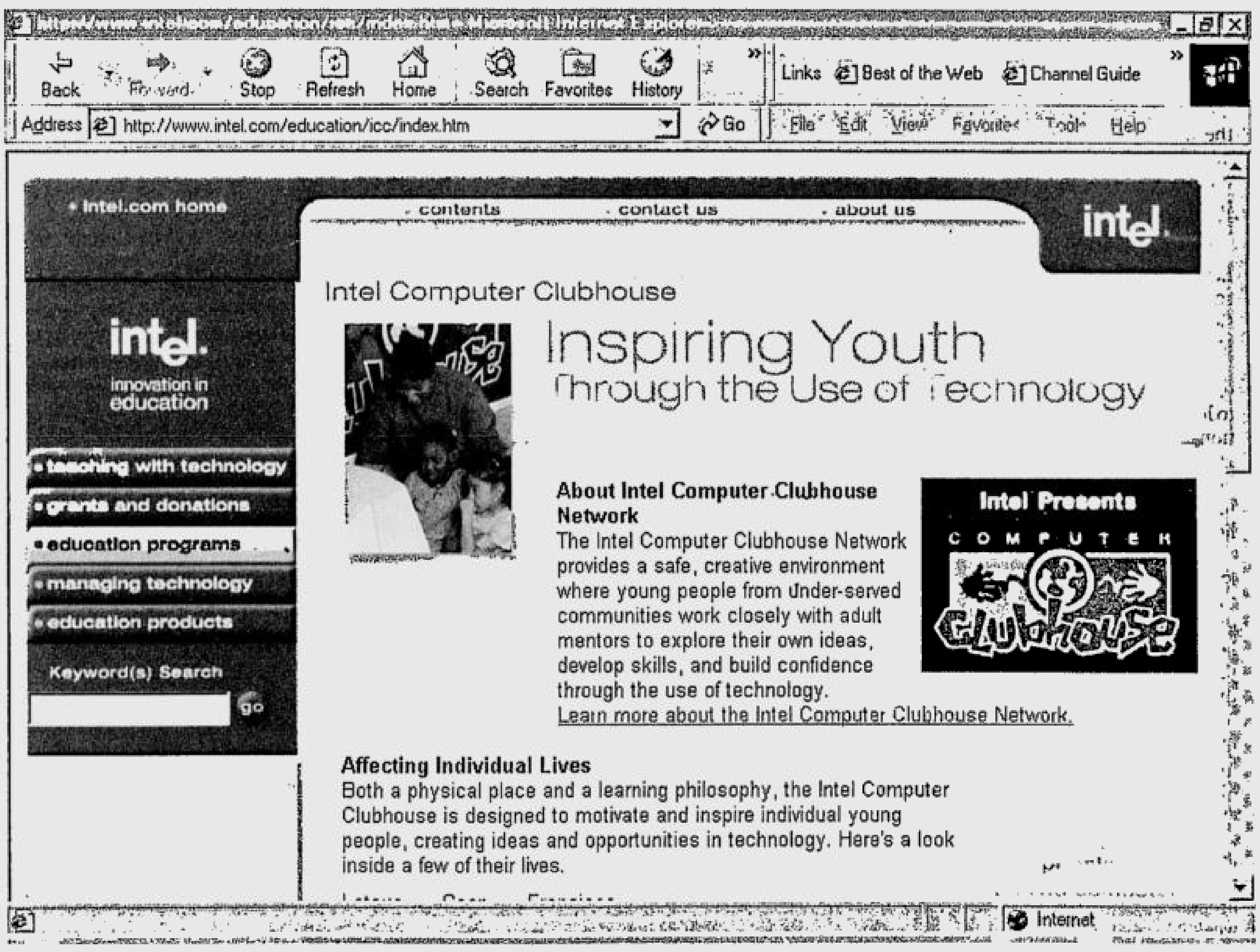
Briggs explains that the clubhouse is by membership since they can only accept 40 children at a time, so the children are accepted daily in batches.

The clubhouse is equipped with 15 PCs (three computers per pod), mini digital video recorders and digital cameras. It has 288 children in its membership list, most of whom are 10 to 12 years old. Volunteers help the kids operate the equipment.

Briggs says that the publicity the clubhouse is getting is helping it secure more funding to continue its operations.

"One time we had Arnold Schwarzenegger visit the clubhouse in February, he met the kids and hung around with them, and we got a lot of donations because of that," she says. "This is all voluntary and we'd love to see children coming here instead of hanging out in the streets."

For Jalil and Francis—the future recording artist and the future lawyer—that decision to be at the clubhouse can spell the difference between a lifetime of misery and one with a meaningful place in society.



Intel Computer Clubhouse

Inspiring Youth Through the Use of Technology

About Intel Computer Clubhouse Network
The Intel Computer Clubhouse Network provides a safe, creative environment where young people from under-served communities work closely with adult mentors to explore their own ideas, develop skills, and build confidence through the use of technology.
Learn more about the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network.

Affecting Individual Lives
Both a physical place and a learning philosophy, the Intel Computer Clubhouse is designed to motivate and inspire individual young people, creating ideas and opportunities in technology. Here's a look inside a few of their lives.

Tech companies join forces in wireless rollout in RP

By Joel D. Pinaroc
INQ7.net

WIRELESS technology in the Philippines is expected to get a much-needed boost following an announcement made by a group of local information technology (IT) companies that they have formed a consortium to deliver mobile services and solutions tailor-made for local enterprises.

The group, backed by global IT vendor Hewlett-Packard, consists of local companies specializing in popular mobile applications such as location-based services, Web-based tracking using geographical positioning system (GPS), Internet kiosks, Java phone applications, satellite phone communication, mobile customer relationship management applications and services based on the immensely popular short messaging service or SMS.

The HP Mobile Applications Council, as the group is called, is made up of local firms BayanMap Corp., eMaya, ED Machines Inc., FindMe, Intellimedia, Jupiter Systems Inc. and Sequel Solutions Inc.

According to group members, the group covers a wide-range of mobile services and mobile applications, with each council member having their respective core competencies in specific fields.

For example, council member FindMe is specializing in location-based online vehicle tracking and management system. The wireless twist is that the application being marketed by FindMe can be integrated with handheld computers and the Internet.

FindMe executives disclosed that cement manufacturing firm Cemex, and freight services giant FedEx, among others, are now using the FindMe system.

For Intellimedia, company representatives disclosed that the software firm has developed an application for field service automation for automobile insurance companies. The application is reportedly integrated into a handheld computer and can be accessed on demand.

Sequel Solutions, a local consulting firm on the other hand has developed an application based on SMS, which has functions such as e-mail and software integration on the SMS platform. Food giant Nestlé, is one of the first to use the system, Sequel Solutions executives disclosed.

Executives of software firm BayanMap, which specializes in geographic information service, said that the company has developed a field-salesman solution that is integrated with handheld computers. The system is currently being pilot-tested by telecommunications firm Globe Telecoms.

Council members Jupiter Systems, eMaya and ED Machines have also developed various mobile software applications targeted toward large corporate users. These applications cover enterprise-focused applications such as customer relationship management and enterprise resource planning software.

The council claims it is a one-stop-shop for local enterprises wanting to use mobile applications, since each of the members can easily integrate their respective products with the products from other council members.

Council members will enjoy marketing support from HP, which recently announced the completion of its merger with Compaq.

"With these solution offerings, companies can gain more through connected, intelligent, and secure real-time interactivity," said Vincent Rodriguez, alliance manager of HP Philippines.

Experience not a factor in getting IT job, says exec

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva
INQ7.net

JOB opportunities for information technology (IT) graduates and professionals have not changed much despite the downtrend in the high-tech industry, a head of a local multinational IT company said.

"The skills or the experience of IT professionals are not really factors in landing a good job in the industry these days. It is the company's capacity to pay these professionals that matters," said Joey Gurango, managing director of the Philippine Research and Development Center of Microsoft Great Plains.

"If you really want to maximize your skills, you have to work overseas," Gurango said, noting that software development skills remain the highest-paying job for IT professionals.

But it is a fallacy to believe that pay for IT professionals is dependent on their skills, he said.

He added that IT companies such as Microsoft Great Plains set compensation packages even before they start hiring IT professionals. In short, it does not matter if one is a Java, Linux, or a Microsoft programmer.

As a rule of thumb, Gurango advised that IT professionals and even fresh graduates seeking employment should always ask what a certain job or position is for.

"Remember, all companies don't pay people based on their skills, but on the importance of the job," he added. "Sometimes bookkeepers are paid higher than computer programmers."

For IT professionals planning to work for a local firm serving the local market, the average compensation package is P20,000 a month and below, Gurango said, adding that there are even companies offering P10,000 a month or even a little above minimum wage.

"If a company in the US offers a package that is close to a minimum wage, chances are no one would want to apply. But in the Philippines, people would go for it," Gurango said.

For IT professionals wanting to work for a multinational company serving a local market, Gurango said the average pay increases up to P25,000 a month.

The highest compensation packages are offered in multinational companies serving a global market. Starting pay ranges from P25,000 to P50,000 a month. "These companies have to contend with the disparity of pay between those hired overseas and those hired here. They are careful not to make the disparity too big," he said.

Gurango has worked for Apple Computer, where he was involved in the initial launches of the Apple III, Lisa and Macintosh computers. Eventually, he moved on to Microsoft Corp. as consultant for the development of version one of Excel for Windows.

In 1987, Gurango co-founded Match Data Systems in Seattle, Washington (he claims to have used four credit cards as initial funds to start the firm), which led to the establishment of a Philippine subsidiary in 1991.

In 1999, Match Data was bought by Great Plains Philippines. In 2001, Microsoft Corp. bought Great Plains.

Global computer training center sets up RP office

By Charles E. Buban

TO MEET the ever-increasing demands of the technology revolution in the region, the largest independent computer training company in the world has established a corporate headquarters here in the Philippines to offer its unique training approach that blends traditional classroom learning with computer-aided learning.

To be known as the New Horizons Computer Learning Center of Makati, Philippines, the school is the latest addition to the New Horizons Computer Learning Center Inc.'s network of more than 290 training centers worldwide.

The New Horizons network provides its clients a unique advantage by offering more ways to learn, more course offerings and more locations than any other in the industry. In year 2000 alone, the school's international network of over 2,000 classrooms and more than 2,700 instructors has delivered approximately 3 million student-training days.

The learning center will introduce to its Philippine clients the Integrated Learning approach to computer training that features three methods of delivering IT training, namely Classroom Learning, Online Live Learning and the self-paced Online Anytime Learning, which carries the same course content.

Businesses and individuals can choose from hundreds of desktop applications and technical training courses in the school's learning centers. Students can gain career-enhancing knowledge and skills any way or any time they want.

In addition to instructor-led classes and training, the company will offer Web-based training, computer labs, certification exam preparation tools and 24-hour, seven-day-a-week help desk support. The center is a certified technical trainer of Microsoft and Novell, among others.

The New Horizons Computer Learning Center has successfully provided an instructor-led training for almost two decades. With hundreds of training centers in 47 countries, it offers the industry's largest number of technical training and desktop applications courses.

As the foundation of the school's Integrated Learning, the Classroom Learning has become more enriching, dynamic and valuable for the students. The school's traditional classroom delivery method—instructor lecture and demonstration, followed by student practice through hands-on exercise—has been enhanced to include Web-based resources during and after class.

Apart from the post-class Help Desk support for its students, the school will also provide an online companion course available through Online Anytime to the class they take in the center. That means they can retake their course anytime they want through simulated exercises to help reinforce learning.

For students who opt for a more convenient way to learn, there's Online Live Learning where they can take advantage of the benefits of human interaction and instructor-led classroom training combined with the convenience of the Internet.

This course is ideal for clients who are not able to leave the office for days at a time, but still want to take advantage of "live" instruction-based teaching. Online Live is the ideal training solution as students can learn through a dynamic, Web-based classroom experience from their home, workplace, or on the road.

If a student wants a comprehensive learning experience but prefers a more independent approach, Online Anytime is available as a Web-based or computer-based training. The course content is similar to the instructor-led training.

Online Anytime is more cost-effective than just about any other learning option since with more than 1,200 courses, there is something for everyone, from high-level technical training to basic desktop applications and business skills. Plus, the online courses are completely searchable so when the student wants to learn a specific skill, he can pinpoint the exact part of the course needed for viewing.

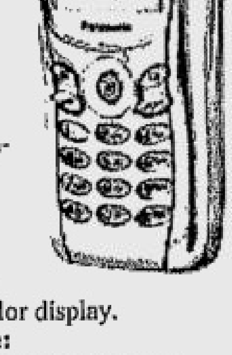
Students enrolled to any of the three course types will be allocated a private webpage with password access to class schedules, tracking progress and options for taking advantage of multiple delivery methods.

The New Horizons Computer Learning Center of Makati, Philippines is located at the 10th floor of Robinsons Summit Center in 6783 Ayala Avenue with website at www.newhorizons.com.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A brief review of the Panasonic GD-75

By Jerry Liao



Strengths:

TOUTED as Panasonic's first antenna-less phone, the GD-75 is a fashionable, small and sleek, mobile phone. It is a dual band phone using the GSM 900/1800 network, weighing about 82g, with 106 x 46 x 16mm overall dimensions. The phone has a maximum talk time of about five hours, and a maximum standby time of 150 hours. It comes in two colors, silver and black. Personally, I like the silver better.

Some of its key features include wireless applications protocol (WAP) capability, hands free speakerphone with two speakers, a large display accommodating up to six lines of text, a multi-directional joystick, polyphonic ring tones, screensavers, SMS chat, SMS group sending, a phone book that can store up to 200 entries, a recordable voice function and downloadable wallpaper images.

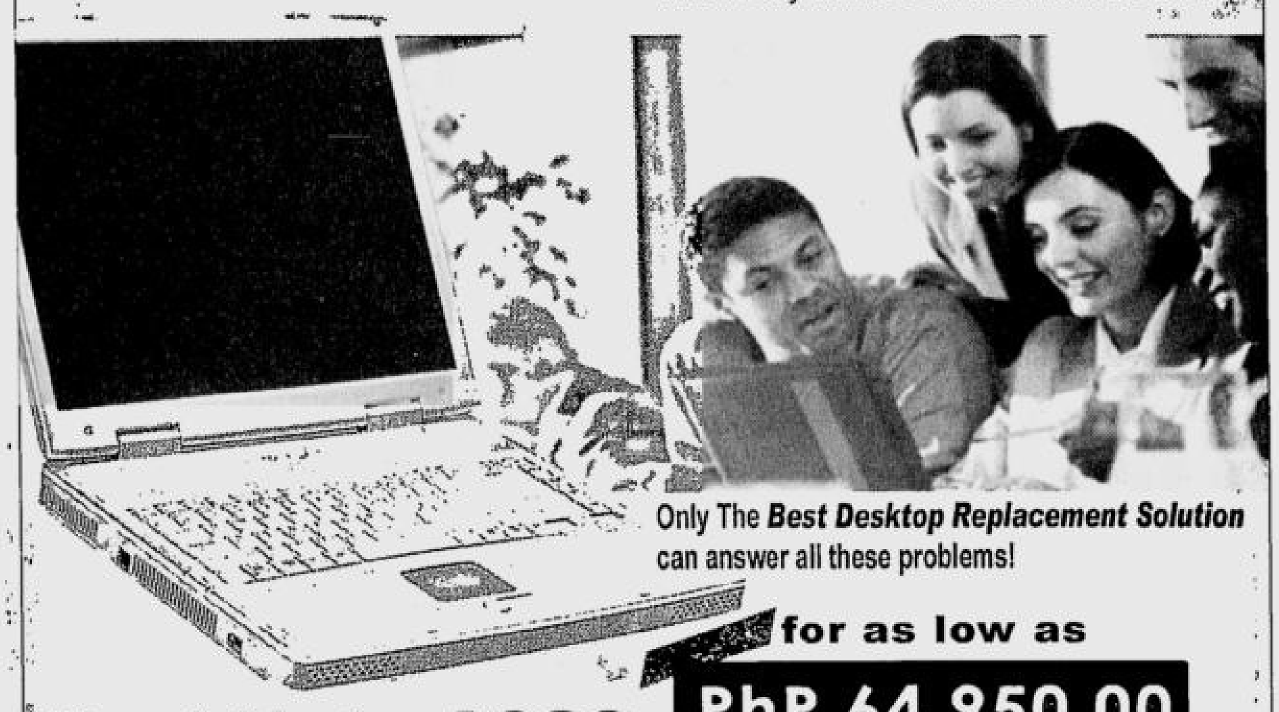
Weaknesses:

The GD75's battery doesn't snap in place, instead it uses the phone cover to hold it in. You have to get used to using the joystick for navigation specially if you're familiar with phones that uses key activated commands. The phone has no infrared port.

It does not have a Delete All command thus, clearing all messages in the subscriber's identification module or SIM card may take some time. Further, for a price tag of around P7,000 to P8,000 the phone could use a color display.

The bottom line:

The Panasonic GD75 is packed with cool features and is relatively affordable. Almost all features are built-in, thus eliminating the need for add-ons. The audio quality is good as well as the phone's "reception" capabilities. Overall, the GD75 is a better version of any Panasonic phones that I have seen so far.



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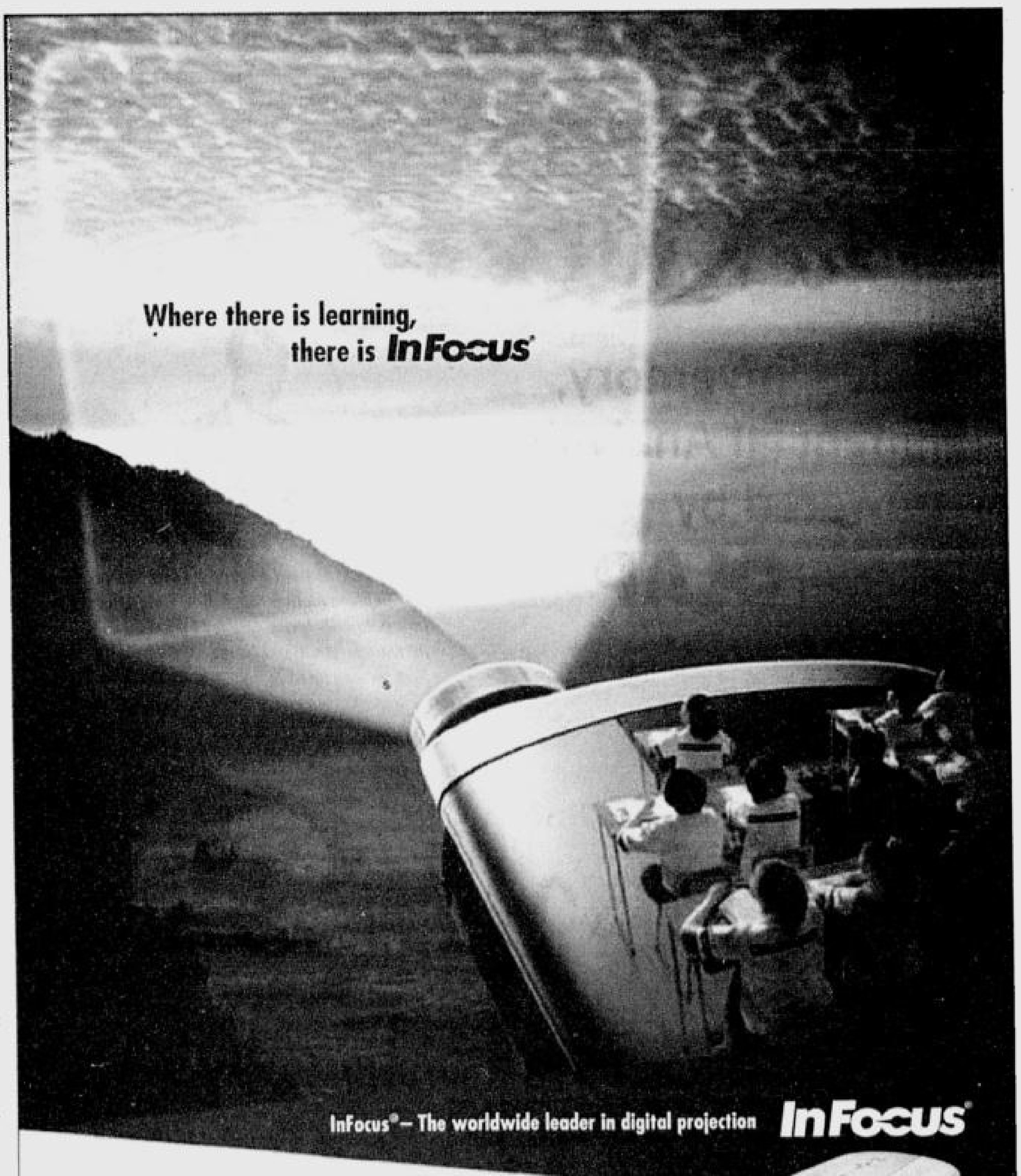

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CANNED TUNA EXPORTS

RP may get half of Ecuador quota to US

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE US Senate is currently reviewing proposals to give half of Ecuador's planned canned tuna export quota to the Philippines to appease the Macapagal administration, which is protesting Washington's plan to give duty-free perks to Andean countries.

This is one of the options being considered by US senators apart from granting duty-free access to Philippine canned tuna exports and junking the canned tuna provision in the Andean Trade Preferences Act (Atpa), according to documents obtained from the Department of Trade and Industry.

A number of US senators were reportedly considering including the Philippines in an amendment to the Atpa as proposed by Louisiana Sen. John Breaux, a Democrat.

The amendment seeks to limit duty-free treatment for Andean canned tuna to only 20 percent of US domestic production.

Documents from the trade department showed that US senators were planning to grant the Philippines half of the quota entitlement of Ecuador under the Breaux amendment.

Atpa has already been approved for extension up to 2005 by the US House of Representatives, with no limits on canned exports, as part of an economic stimulus package aimed at weaning Andean economies from the illegal drugs trade.

The Philippines and other Asean countries have protested the duty-free perks to be granted to Andean countries as discriminatory and detrimental to their tuna export industries.

These countries are asking for equal treatment or maintaining the status quo.

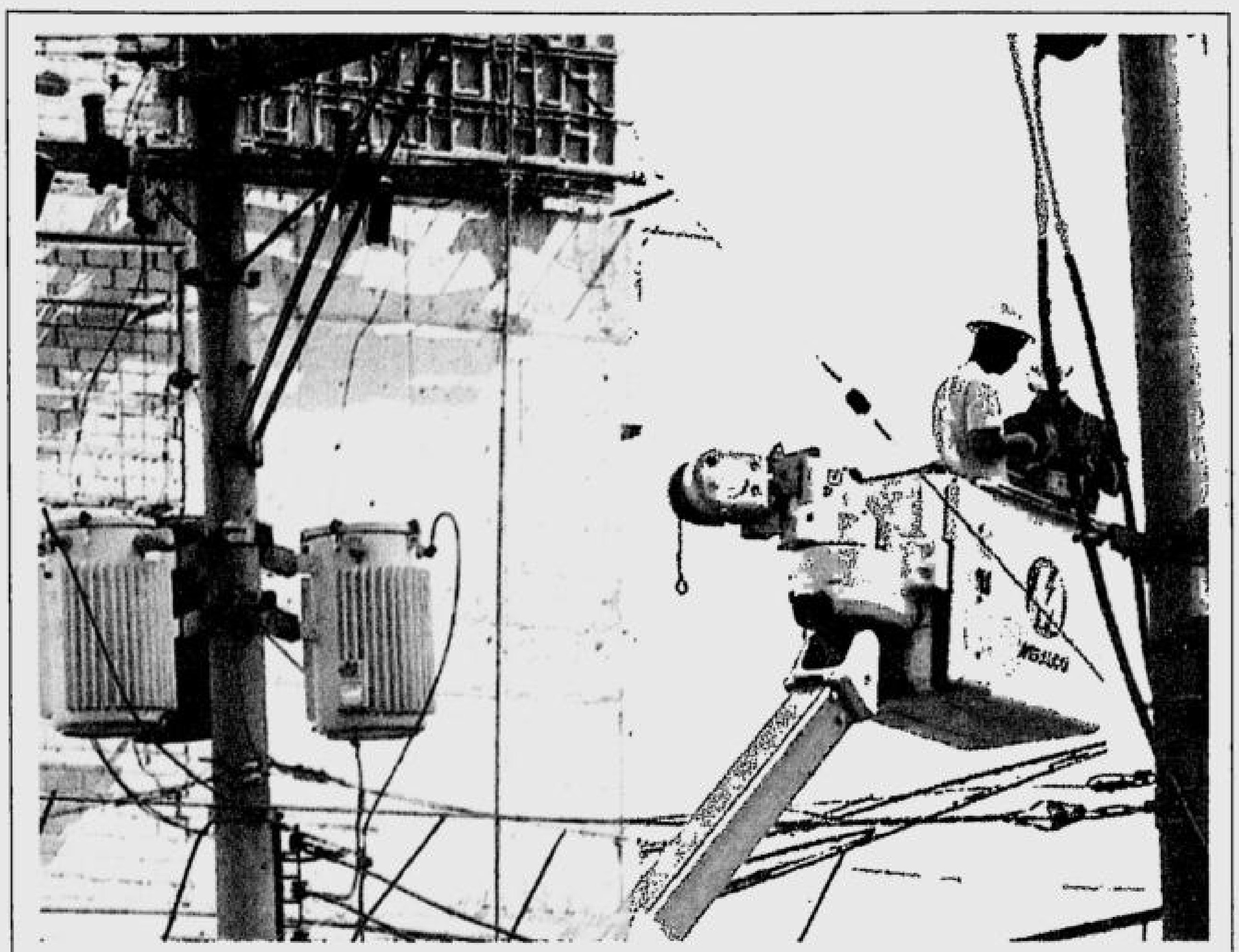
Philippine canned tuna exports to the United States are levied duties of between 6 percent (in brine) and 35 percent (in oil).

The Philippines and its neighbors are worried that the duty-free perks will allow Andean countries to wipe out competition in the United States, considering that they have the capacity to meet the annual demand of American consumers estimated at 50 million cases.

Philippine Ambassador to the United States Albert del Rosario said the Philippines—the second-biggest canned tuna exporter to the United States next to Thailand—was likely to lose roughly $100 million in annual exports should the United States push through with its plan to grant zero duty to Andean countries.

Del Rosario said this would affect eight tuna canneries in Mindanao employing 17,000 workers.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has asked US President George W. Bush for duty-free perks for Philippine canned tuna exports to the United States, citing the Philippines' all-out support for the US campaign against terrorism to justify her government's plea.



LINEMEN of the Manila Electric Co. repair an electric post. President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the National Power Corp. to trim electricity tariffs amid popular protests, although government officials have warned that it will push the utility deeper into debt. AFP

Napocor's petition to raise rates by 17¢/kwh goes unchallenged

THE NATIONAL Power Corp.'s petition for unbundled rates went unchallenged in a hearing before the Energy Regulatory Commission on Friday.

The state-run power firm is seeking an increase in its wholesale prices by 17 centavos per kilowatt-hour, as this is based on a 12-percent rate of profitability.

During the ERC's hearing on Friday, only one group—the Napocor Industrial Consumers Association—sat opposite representatives of Napocor.

Robert Malilin, chair of NICA's technical committee, said a task force had been formed to speed up the resolution of Napocor's petition.

"To avoid too many hearings, we decided to just meet as a body and try to come up with a compromise," Malilin told the INQUIRER.

He said some members of the task force were representatives of Napocor, Manila Electric Co., Visayan Electric Co., Cagayan Electric Power and Light Co., Davao Light and Power Co., and the Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association.

"We discussed all the points that have been presented (in the hearings), and I think we have come up with a happy compromise among all the groups represented," Malilin said.

DBCC planning to cut expenditure target

By Clarissa S. Batino

UNSETTLED by a revenue shortfall in the first quarter, the inter-agency Development Budget Coordinating Council is planning to reduce its expenditure target this year to keep the government's deficit below P130 billion.

"We have to review the targets, especially the expenditures. If the revenue side will not improve in the coming months, we have to slow down on spending. Otherwise, we may have to deal with an uncontrollable deficit," a ranking finance official said.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said in an interview that a review had been set, but it would have to wait until after the first half of the year.

"It's too early. We agreed to do a review only after the second quarter," he said.

The government incurred a budget deficit of P61.208 billion in the first three months of the year, overshooting the target by 15.64 percent, on account of weaker revenue collections.

The DBCC was reported earlier to be studying a request from the Bureau of Internal Revenue to cut the government's economic growth target this year to 2 percent from a range of 4 to 4.5 percent.

The BIR is asking for a lower grossdomestic product growth mark, as it wants to cut its collection target this year from P447.6

DBCC/B8

Financing companies chalk up 156% increase in 2001 income

By Elena R. Torrijos

FINANCING companies chalked up a net income of P1.126 billion last year, up 156 percent from the previous year's P440 million, on the back of better financing and leasing revenues.

In a report, the Securities and Exchange Commission disclosed that financing companies had a gross income of P7.5 billion in 2001 from P6.691 billion in 2000, while their expenses grew at a far slower pace of 2 percent to P6.374 billion from P6.25 billion.

In terms of net income, BPI Card Finance Corp. topped the list, with a profit of P397 million.

Another unit of No. 2 lender Bank of the Philippine Islands, BPI Capital Corp., was in second, with a net income of P375.86 million, followed by PCI Leasing and Finance Corp., with P200.24 million.

In terms of resources, BPI Card was the largest financing firm with P4.978 billion, with PCI Leasing and BPI Leasing following respectively.

Total assets of the country's financing firms fell 5.76 percent to P52.166 billion, according to the SEC report. Their capital stock likewise dropped to P11.68 billion from P12.256 billion year-on-year.

There were 177 licensed financing companies as of end-2001.

So far this year, the SEC has already revoked the license of one financing firm, Amianan Finance Corp.

Reyco Leasing and Finance Corp., meanwhile, surrendered its license to operate as a financing company.

Since December last year the SEC granted 14 companies licenses to operate as financing firms, bringing the total number of firms to 190 as of May 9.

The SEC has also sent show-cause letters to 12 financing companies for their failure to file their statements of condition for the last quarter of 2001.

These are Mercator Finance Corp., KP Finance Inc., Monte de Piedad Finance Co. Inc., Stanford Finance Corp., Compact Resources Finance Corp., Dyno Finance Corp., Fil-Estate Finance Corp., Rural Enterprises Development & Finance Corp., Wise Credit Corp., Credit Associates Inc., Rural Electrification Finance Inc. and RBO Group Financing Corp.

NTC to designate infotech hubs

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DESIGNATION and establishment of information technology hubs in strategic areas all over the country could help alleviate the 3.8-million landline glut that the country is experiencing.

The National Telecommunications Commission is currently working on a memorandum circular that would designate certain parts of the country, especially university belts and special economic zones, as IT hubs.

In an interview, NTC chief Eliseo Rio Jr. explained that because it was very difficult to convince consumers to subscribe to landlines, the unused lines would remain idle assets for telecommunications companies.

With the establishment of IT hubs though, these lines could be used for Internet connectivity, he added.

Aside from the circular's being a possible answer to the country's landline glut, around 20 percent of university courses offered today could be taken online following the possible approval of the circular by the end of the month.

Rio said the increase in Internet connectivity would encourage colleges and universities to "digitize" their curricula as well as the contents of their library to enable their students to take courses online.

"It is distance learning taken one step further. Students can go to their classrooms only twice a semester—for midterms and for finals. The savings for transportation and allowance could be invested in computer terminals and Internet connectivity," he said.

Aside from the potential convenience and flexibility this would give the students, this would also give rise to local content developers—something the Philippines is short of.

"It's not enough that we have the IT infrastructure. We should also have local content. Otherwise, only the foreign content providers would benefit from the infrastructure we would put up," he said.

The private sector could take advantage of this NTC initiative by providing the necessary bandwidth and facilities.

"Anybody can bring high-speed connectivity. The (circular) is technology-neutral. Locators (in IT parks) can also have eonomies of scale by banding together," Rio said.

When the IT hubs are declared, he said the volume of users this would attract would drive down the cost of bandwidth.

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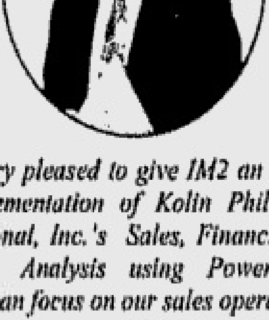

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Mr. Tom Y. Tseng, (3rd from left) CEO- Kolin Phils. International, Inc., with Mr. C.F. Hu (2nd from left) from Kolin Taiwan accepted the project turnover from Mr. Michael del Carmen, (3rd from right) President – IM2 Corporation.

The men and women of Kolin Philippines International Inc. with IM2 Corporation implementing team.

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Who's to blame for rising electricity rates?

By Clarissa S. Batino

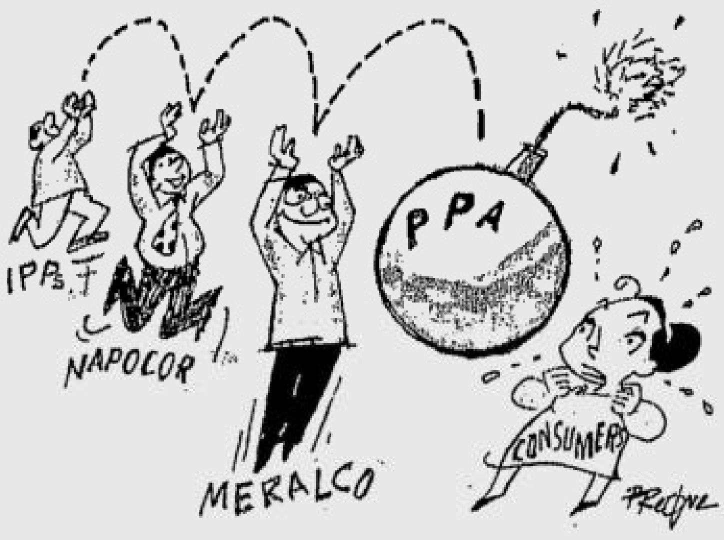
IT IS HOT outside and all you can think about once you get home is to turn on the aircon unit and rest. But this luxury is something that your skyrocketing electricity bills have taken away from you.

And you who toil every day to put food on the table, send kids to good schools and have the luxury of resting comfortably, have every right to rage.

The problem is, everybody's pointing a finger at this so-called PPA or purchased power adjustment. But who exactly do you blame for this PPA?

Should it be the National Power Corp., or utilities like the Manila Electric Co.? Or the Ramos administration that signed the expensive contracts with more than 40 independent power producers or IPPs? You are not to blame if in your wrath you curse all three to a life of thunder and torment.

But would it not be better karma if you get mad only at those who deserve it. Or at least, distribute your anger proportionate to their culpability.



The PPA is a component of the Napocor bill that reflects changes in the prices of fuel and foreign exchange. But the bulk of the PPA is the cost of expensive electricity that the Napocor is forced to buy from the IPPs whether or not the power is used. The PPA is over and above the basic charge that Napocor and Meralco collect from their consumers.

Currently, consumers pay for 5,000 megawatts of electricity that they do not use through the PPA.

The onerous contracts were signed during the Ramos administration to put an end to the eight- to 12-hour rotating brownouts that plagued Luzon in the early '90s.

The power crisis was largely a consequence of the government's decision during the time of Corazon Aquino to mothball the 600-megawatt Bataan nuclear power plant without putting up new plants to provide for the power the nuclear plant would have provided. By then Napocor's old and weary thermal plants continually conked out when over-utilized and could not provide for the increased demand for power that transpired when the economy boomed after the departure of Marcos.

One cannot fault the Ramos administration for signing pricey transactions to solve the power crisis as it did not have some choice then. Yet some contracts were signed at the same onerous

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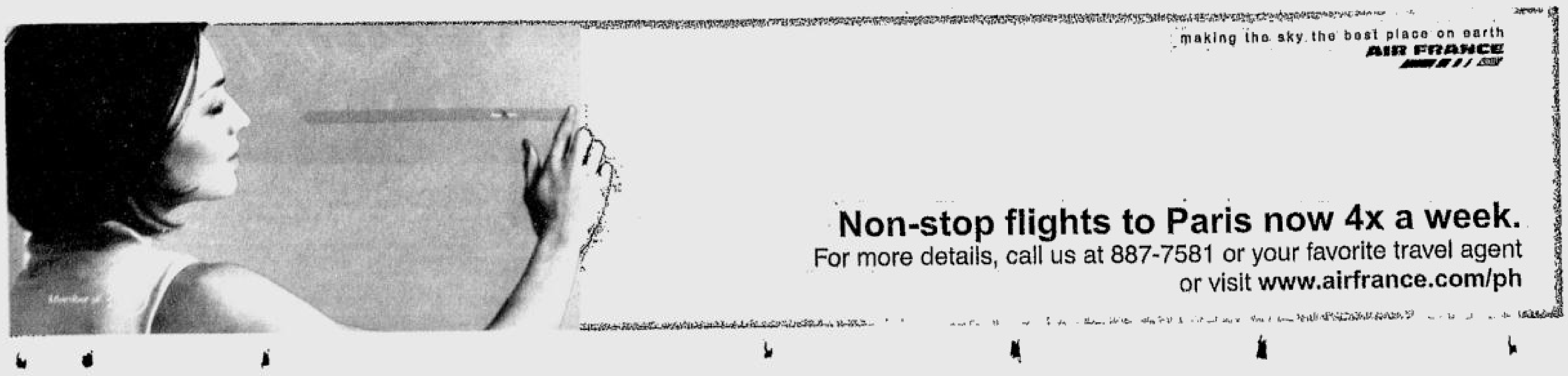
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MBA talk set

A TWO-DAY orientation session on Master of Business Administration studies for new graduates, young professionals or mid-level executives who plan to pursue an MBA degree overseas will be conducted by International Education Specialists (Inter-Ed 819-1001/819-1002) on May 24 and 25 at its office in Makati.

The one-on-one interview sessions with applicants will be handled by Inter-Ed president Roger D. Bartholomew who will discuss the MBA curriculum, admission process, financial assistance, student life and foreign culture.

The interview sessions will be undertaken with available materials from University of Akron, Southern New Hampshire University (United States); Bond University, University of Wollongong (Australia) and University of Birmingham, University of North London and Cardiff University (United Kingdom).

According to Bartholomew, the MBA orientation sessions will be launched by Inter-Ed to address the growing concern over the difficulty encountered by students in selecting the right school overseas to obtain an MBA.

"Like many prospective MBA students, an applicant may already have a good idea which MBA program he would like to attend," he explained. "Inter-Ed will help him select alternative schools, make the selection wisely and Inter-Ed will make him understand the characteristic and features of the many available choices."

He disclosed that recent surveys have shown that MBA is still the most popular graduate course for Filipinos, whether taken here or overseas, because of the perception that MBA is a valuable career accelerator that can give the holder better job opportunities.

New bank VPs

ASIA United Bank recently promoted Antonio V. Agcaoili Jr. and Florante C. Del Mundo to the rank of senior vice president, Treasury Group; and first vice president, Audit and Compliance Group, respectively.

A De La Salle University graduate with a degree in finance and masters in business administration, Agcaoili joined AUB in November 1997 as its first vice president, dealing head, Treasury Group. Prior to AUB, Agcaoili was with Banco Santander Phils. Inc. as vice president, Treasury Head and was with Citibank NA, Manila Branch—Funds Management as vice president, dealing head.

Del Mundo joined Asia United Bank in 1998 as vice president, head, Audit and Compliance Group. His previous employment includes Sycip Gorres and Velayo CPA's as senior auditor, Citytrust Banking Corp. and Bank of the Philippine Islands as assistant vice president and as vice president for Union Bank of the Philippines. He graduated from The Philippine School of Business Administration with a degree in BSBA-Accounting. He took his Post-Graduate Studies at the Asian Institute of Management in 1998.

Timely interventions

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Evelyn R. Singson

A MUCH-awaited event took place last May 11. Asian Hospital and Medical Center was blessed by His Eminence Ricardo Cardinal Vidal in the honored presence of President Macapagal-Arroyo and Former President Fidel V. Ramos.

"And, lastly, I thank my mother who inspired me to work so hard to see this project completed. Throughout the long years Asian Hospital was transformed from a germ of an idea to a dream and finally, to being, as it is today, my mother was there to help, to encourage, to support and to produce miracles just when I most needed them . . . usually in the nick of time." Until the minute I walked up to the stage to deliver my opening remarks as Asian Hospital's chair, this was how I wanted my speech to end.

But then, I thought the line for my speech was between my mother and I, very private and very personal. Only a few people in the crowd knew my mother. And I could not claim sole credit for the building of Asian Hospital. Thus, I left the statement unspoken and went on to give my gratitude to everyone who contributed to the making of this institution.

The following day May 12 was Mother's Day. For some reason, I felt very bad. I regretted having held back what I did the day before. And then, as in a flashback, I recalled the many times my mother granted me my every wish.

Asian Hospital is a project the two of us built together. I conceptualized it as she lay in her ICU bed for four weeks way back in 1994. Makati Med was extremely busy with patient activities. Every doctor and nurse looked harried and overworked. The line of people seeking medical help did not seem to end. I began to wonder why no one was building a hospital in spite of the dire need for it.

We stayed at Makati Med for six weeks, enough time for me to learn the functions in a hospital and develop friendships with some of mother's doctors. This was the time I heard about Dr. Jorge Garcia.

After my mother's confinement, I seriously studied how I could start this hospital project. I knew the first step was to form a core group of doctors who would agree to provide medical inputs.

Luckily, I learned from my friend O. V. Roy that his close friend Dr. Garcia wanted to spearhead a hospital project of international standing. Typical of O.V., he introduced us to each other.

Soon after, the three of us contributed P750,000 each to incorporate Asian Hospital Inc. With the funds, we commissioned SGV to do a feasibility study which we used as prospectus for prospective investors to the project.

With the money left and with P5 million we borrowed from Penta Capital, Danny Venida, who joined the group, convinced Filinvest to allow us to put an option on a 1.75-hectare land which was zoned for a medical center at Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang.

Soon after, we succeeded in convincing Insular Life, Health Delivery System and DMCI and a large corps of doctors to become our first investors and with the money we collected, we made the land payments to Filinvest. Later, we agreed to be partners with a Singaporean healthcare group eager to start a Philippine healthcare company.

All this time, while we were raising funds, I urged my mother to pray very hard for the success of our effort at finding investors. I knew she had a direct line to God. She probably bombarded Heaven with her prayers.

My mother battled with her illness and seemed to lose her fighting spirit. I kept encouraging her to hang on and promised her that if she would be confined again, it would be in a new hospital I was going to build. Sometimes, she would bounce back and tease me to hurry up with it.

To hold her spirit up, I even told her that she would sit beside President Ramos on the stage at the hospital's ground-breaking ceremonies.

My mother never really recovered her health. In 1996, even before we broke ground, she quietly passed away. Very much like her, she fell into a coma and the early morning after, she slipped away at the ICU of Makati Med.

Despite all our good intentions, the building of Asian Hospital was full of seemingly insurmountable problems. While we were in the middle of our fund-raising activities, the Asian financial crisis came and the peso fell to unbelievable lows.

The Erap impeachment distanced the country from foreign investors. These events affected our costs and our ability to raise credit.

Fortunately for us, there were financial institutions spurred with noble goals of allocating some loanable funds on projects designed for public interest.

Because of the timing of our loan releases and struggles with complex bureaucracies, our funds would be depleted at critical periods of construction.

During these times, I begged my mother to intercede with Divine Providence for us. Call it faith, but we resolved and survived one crisis after another.

Other difficulties arose: some with members of the construction team, some with project managers, and worse, with rumor mongers and underhanded plotters who spread nastier rumors as the project neared completion. One needed a tough hide, a heart of steel and unbridled determination to overcome all these. I am sure that the major players in the project had the best intentions and pure hearts to surmount all these. Through all, I never lost faith in the power of goodness. I knew that my sponsor up there was genuinely interested in seeing Asian Hospital serve the medical needs of our communities.

I wish my mother were around to see Asian Hospital today. It is what she would have wanted it to be. She would have been very pleased to find a hospital where every room has a view, even the ICU, of a clean, pleasant, bright surrounding staffed by warm and caring nurses where the patient's comfort is everyone's foremost concern.

Excellent doctors and state-of-the-art medical equipment are a given.

She would have found the chapel beautifully decorated by no less than known Filipino artists, a welcoming lobby paralleled only by classy hotels and a courtyard surrounded by a garden.

Many more amenities are forthcoming. Because Asian Hospital believes in holistic healing, it blends the physical, the psychological and the spiritual aspects of hospital care to hasten the patient's recovery.

If I sound as if my mother is extraordinary, I admit that she is—for me. But she is like yours and everyone's mothers, too. Always there for her children . . .here and the afterlife. *(This article reflects the personal opinion of the author who is governor and treasurer of the Management Association of the Philippines, president of APC Group Inc. and chairperson of the Asian Hospital and Medical Center. The MAP Secretariat and the author may be reached via mapsec@globenet.com.ph.)*

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Changing landscape of insurance industry

By Reynaldo A. de Dios
Risk & Insurance Management Consultant

THE FORCES of globalization, liberalization, deregulation, information technology, convergence of financial institutions as well as socioeconomic and political risks have radically altered the world of business and commerce, and the global marketplace is now experiencing an era of uncertainty.

All of these developments have changed the insurance landscape. Further aggravating the situation was the unimaginable losses caused by the terroristic acts of last Sept. 11, 2001, where the deliberate crashing of four hijacked commercial jets, two of which struck the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, resulted in the most expensive event in the history of insurance, not to mention the loss of approximately 3,000 lives and the untold suffering of the survivors and loved ones.

Never in their wildest imagination did the highly experienced underwriters project a loss of such dimensions affecting practically all lines of insurance. This tragic occurrence has placed the insurance systems of the world to the test and questions have been raised as to the limits of insurability and consequently the role and responsibilities of the insurance industry.

Meeting commitments

While the claims obligation of insurers and reinsurers are estimated at $40 billion and above, the large majority of the hundreds of risk takers should be able to meet their commitments which is a tribute to the integrity of insurance. There are claims where legal issues have yet to be resolved among which are the definition of what constitutes an occurrence and the complexity of business interruption losses. In addition, many big name insurers and reinsurers including Lloyd's have seen their net worth decline caused by the financial impact on investments and have had to put in additional capital or call for new investors. Also, a number of medium-sized reinsurers have either ceased underwriting or stopped operations temporarily. Of particular concern is the reliability of some retrocessionaires whose resources may have been seriously impaired by the accumulation of losses.

Shortage of capacity

Consequently, this has resulted in a shortage of capacity as a number of reinsurers are now underwriting on a net line basis.

To take advantage of under capacity and increased rates, eight new reinsurers with substantial capital have entered the market with most of them based in Bermuda. 7 Lloyd's Syndicates have likewise augmented their capacity to meet the demands of the market whilst 18 reinsurers have increased their capital. Furthermore, several reinsurers have also suffered a downgrade of their security ratings by Standard & Poors.

The immediate effects of Sept. 11 on the industry were the substantial increases in premium rates and the exclusion of losses attributable to Sabotage and Terrorism (S&T) and Cyber risks in insurance policies and treaties beginning the year 2002. However, of late, the S&T cover is now available on a stand-alone basis but subject to limited sums insured, higher deductibles and additional premium. The recent earthquakes that devastated Taiwan twice, Turkey, India and Greece have prompted reinsurers to review their underwriting assessments of natural perils and they have imposed restrictive guidelines in their acceptances of these risks.

Impact on RP

What was the impact on the Philippine insurance market? As far as the personal lines of insurance or bread and butter business such as motor vehicles, homeowners, life and personal accident, the agents servicing these types of accounts were not too affected except that the economic downturn has forced some clients to reduce coverage to self-insure or not renew.

However, the impact was felt mainly in the highly valued industrial plants covered under industrial All Risks (IAR) policies including high-rise commercial buildings and condominiums where insurance rates have risen several fold because of the earthquake peril. Likewise, the domestic non-life insurance companies had great difficulty in completing their reinsurance requirements particularly on their Excess of Loss Catastrophe treaties covering property aviation, marine, energy and construction all risks. Some of the new conditions are mandated increased retentions on the part of the ceding companies, lower limits, rate increases, reduced commissions, additional underwriting data, new exclusions, terms and conditions plus shorter premium payment warranties.

The question of security is vital and top rate reinsurers are acting toughly as there is a price for AAA rating and leadership. This new environment has diminished considerably the under-rating of large commercial risks as during the prior period of a soft market caused by intense and destructive competition among insurers, the intermediaries had even resorted to dictating rates which was a case of the tail wagging the head. But now, because of the sharp increases in the cost of reinsurance protections, insurers are no longer inclined to be pressured into cash flow underwriting.

Halt on downtrend

In actuality, this development has the beneficial effect of putting to a halt the downward trend of property insurance rates to unrealistic and uneconomic levels, which if continued would have been disastrous to the non-life insurance sector in the event of a catastrophic loss. In the aviation sector, passengers and third-party liability was initially limited to a cover of $50 million at higher rates such that airline passengers were being assessed an extra amount per flight. In fact, some governments have had to become the reinsurer losses in excess of the reduced available limited protection.

The aviation industry suffered tremendously because of the terroristic incidents of Sept. 11, as all four aircraft were insured including passengers and third-party liability and the

CHANGING/ C4

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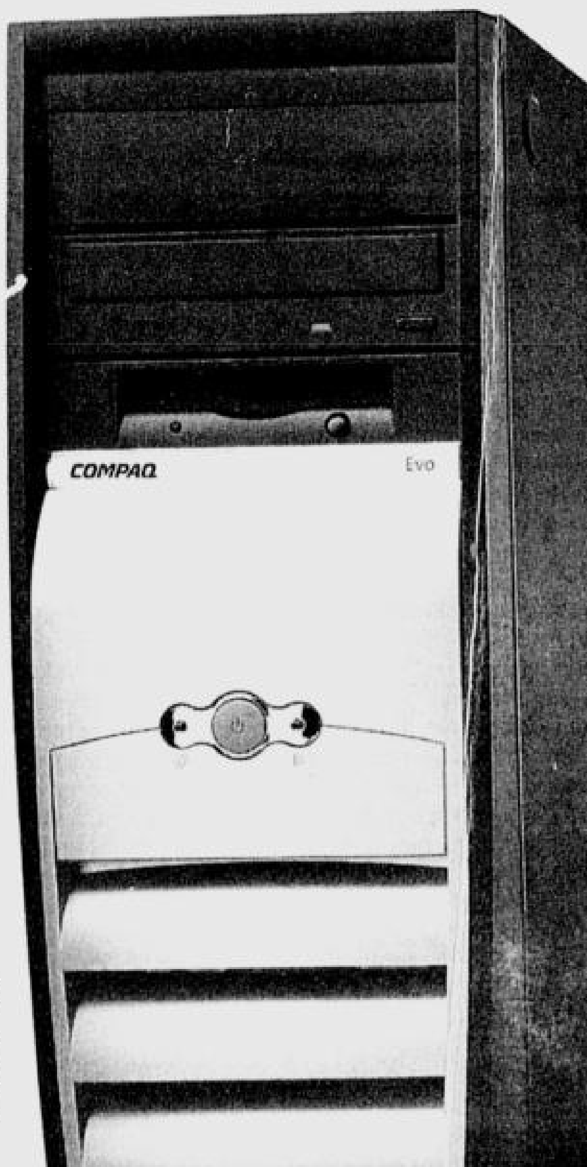

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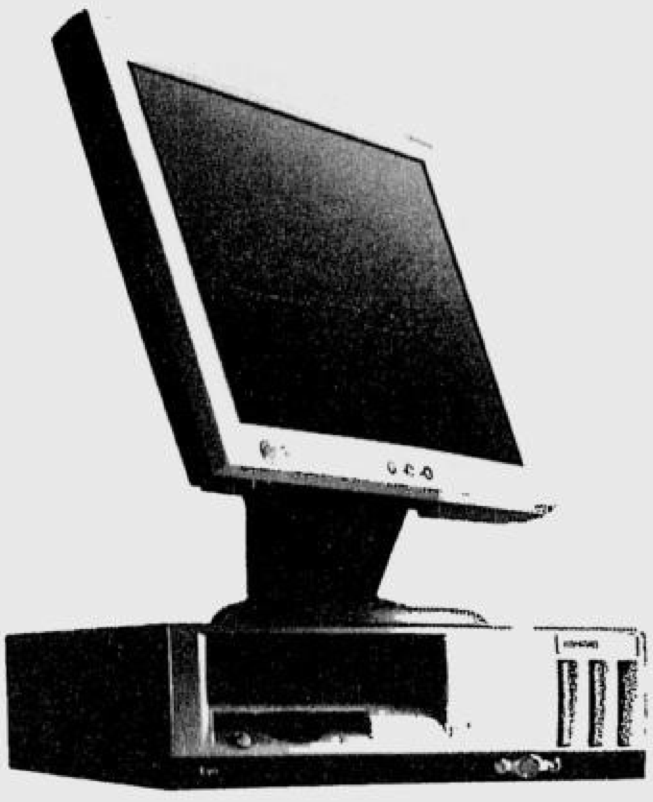

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COMPAQ

‘Don’t make employees too happy’

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

IF THERE is one thing that Unilever Philippines chair and CEO Howard David Belton does not want to happen, that is to make his employees too happy in their jobs.

No, it does not mean making them feel miserable. Rather, Belton wants each member of the Unilever family in the Philippines to always be on the lookout for ways to make Unilever a better company.

MANAGEMENT STYLES

It may mean improvement in the production processes, the kind of service given to the customer or variations in the products themselves to increase market share.

“We know very well that we are in competition, not just with other firms but with other countries. We cannot stand still. It is an adrenaline thing. We should always look for the next best idea,” Belton says.

This culture of competition has done wonders for Unilever, which is celebrating its 75th year of operations in the Philippines.

The Anglo-Dutch firm has produced either the leading brand or the No. 2 or 3 in almost all of its markets.

Market leaders

In the highly competitive shampoo market, Unilever has a 47.2-percent share, with Sunsilk leading the way, followed by Vaseline and Luz. Its Creamsilk conditioner is the undisputed leader in the hair conditioner market, accounting for 79.6 percent.

Unilever also accounts for almost half of the deodorant market, although its Rexona brand is the market leader with 34.2 percent, according to the latest industry figures.

Its other brands include Lux, Lifebuoy and Dove soaps, Axe deodorant and Suave personal care products. Unilever is into food and has a joint venture with Selecta for the ice cream.

Belton says the ideas to bolster market position or to get sales away from competition can come out if there is a big enough room for ideas to come out, tested and finally applied on a grand scale.

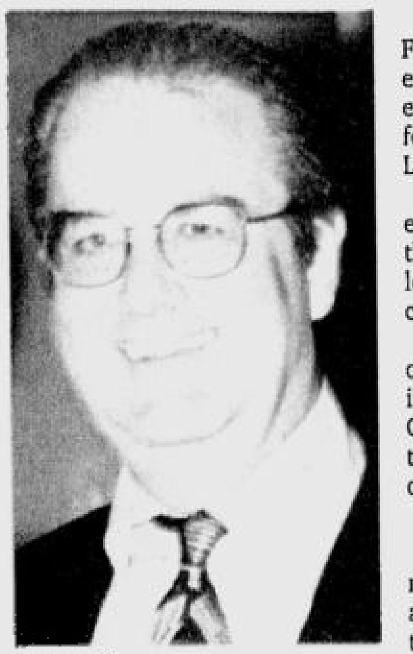
“We try to test these ideas on a small scale first so that we would not make costly mistakes and then we try to make sure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past,” Belton says.

Some ideas, however, inevitably fail but the employees and management are still encouraged to lay out their thoughts. Unilever even has a system where the employees with the best ideas to improve Unilever get a prize.

“A little bit of recognition is very powerful. I believe that people naturally want to be the best that they can be,” he says.

He also considers benchmarking a valuable exercise to keep the company and the staff on their toes. He explains that comparing Unilever with other companies or with best practices contributes to fostering the competitive spirit within the company.

Lever Brothers



BELTON

Belton has been with the Unilever group all his professional life, joining Lever Brothers in the United Kingdom right after graduation in 1968 from the prestigious Oxford University where he majored in History.

He was hired as a management trainee, and Belton says the experience exposed him to all the operations of the highly diversified Unilever group.

From management trainee he went on to join the sales and marketing department, handling Sunlight, Unilever’s first brand and Persil Detergent, its biggest, and in 1983 he moved to Brazil as marketing director.

His last post before joining the Philippine group in 1998 was managing director for detergents of Nippon Lever in Japan.

Belton says he did not have a hard time adjusting to the culture and nuances of Philippine business, saying that he found the employees here very professional and disciplined.

Belton, however, found the Filipinos’ ability to easily express emotions even in work refreshing, especially coming from a more formal organization like Nippon Lever.

“Filipinos are more openly emotional and they like to enjoy themselves. This is why we have a lot of company events where we can get together,” he says.

An old warehouse at the head office on United Nations Ave., for instance, has been renamed the Copracabana and is used to house the 750 employees during parties or events.

Not just work

Belton says he supports less formal events in the companies such as parties as he considers it important for the employees to have a balanced life. Like he says, life is not just about work.

This is one reason why Belton is actively involved in other projects to help the Philippines such as the Sagip Pasig movement where he has been a member since he came in 1998.

“First we started by just cleaning our factories, but then it was not enough. We may not be dumping garbage in the Pasig River but others are, so we got involved in the project,” he says.

Belton says he is personally interested in the program having seen how the River Thames in England was cleaned up, although it took all of 40 years.

“I believe there is hope because the Pasig River is already a lot cleaner than it was. After three years you don’t smell anything anymore. All it takes is a sustained effort through many years and the biggest problem now is the domestic waste or the sewerage,” he says.

Who’s to blame . . .

From page C1

and expensive terms even when power supply was restored to normal and at a time when the system was already running with excess capacity before his term ended.

This is the part where the former beloved President may have to do some explaining.

So the Napocor passes on this PPA to electricity distributors like Meralco, which in turn passes the cost to the consumers.

PPA not from Meralco

What consumers must understand now is that not all the PPA that Meralco collects originates from the Napocor alone contrary to the impression the public usually gets from the statements of the distributor.

Lately in fact, the bulk of the PPA charges of Meralco is used to pay for its own power producers, cover for its systems inefficiencies like uncollected electricity bills or illegal power connections, and pay for its franchise tax.

Using data from the Energy Regulatory Commission on February billings of Meralco to a customer using an average of 200 kwhs of power or more, less than 30 percent is paid to the Napocor.

Meralco is the country’s largest electricity distributor that services 3.3 million residential and industrial customers in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

It is controlled by the Lopez family, the same group that owns ABS-CBN, Sky Cable, ANC, dzMM, Benpres Holdings, First Philippine Holdings Corp., First Gas Power Corp., Bayan Telecommunications, Maynilad Water, and Rockwell, among others.

Based on the February billing, of the P3.2341 kwh that Meralco had charged each average household consumer, only 65 centavos per kwh was paid to the Napocor. This means P2.0537 per kwh was paid to its own power producers—the 440-megawatt coal-fired Quezon Power and the 1,000 MW Sta. Rita plant that runs on natural gas.

Over-recovery

Meralco also included in the PPA about 53 centavos per kwh of the so-called over-recovery, a component of its billing that had puzzled even the Energy Regulatory Commission. This was the item that the ERC had ordered the Lopez-owned utility just weeks ago to stop collecting.

Since September, Meralco had started collecting the so-called over-recoveries without the blessings of the ERC. In September, it billed each average household consumer 17 centavos per kwh, followed by 13 centavos per kwh a month later, then 23 centavos per kwh in November.

By December, this “mysterious” item in the billing accounted for 42 centavos per kwh and then rose to 49 centavos per kwh in January and again to 53 centavos per kwh in February.

Meralco president Jesus Francisco, however, contested the computation of the PPA above. He explained that Meralco, as a policy, treats the purchases of electricity equally and aggregately.

Francisco says that it is incorrect to say that of the PPA collected by Meralco, only 65 centavos per kwh is paid to Napocor. “I do agree with the figures,” he says.

He explained that in the basic charge, half is already used to pay for power produced by both the Napocor and Meralco’s own supplier. What is not included in the basic charge is collected through the PPA and a proportion of which goes to the Napocor and non-Napocor power producers. He admitted though that the proportion of energy that Meralco gets from non-Napocor plants is increasing.

Francisco explains the over-recovery to be the cost of Meralco’s advances to the power suppliers that it had deferred (and some portions were totally written-off) collecting from its customers.

He says Meralco is really trying to “moderate” the increases in electricity cost by not passing this immediately to consumers.

Based on the presentations of the energy department to the Senate, the PPA of Meralco was rising steadily even as it started buying less and less electricity from the Napocor and more and more from its own power producers.

Cheaper?

Yet Meralco officials had repeatedly claimed that electricity from the power producers it had contracted is cheaper.

The PPA paid by Meralco to Napocor in September out of the connections from an average household user was P1.49 per kwh followed by P1.65 per kwh in October. By this time, Meralco had started using almost half of the capacity of Quezon Power, a generator that it claims not to own but only contracted.

By November, Meralco was only paying the Napocor a PPA of P1.39 per kwh, then P1.18 per kwh the next month, then lower to P1.07 per kwh in January and much lower to 65 centavos per kwh in February.

During these months, Meralco had also started to dispatch half of the capacity of the Sta. Rita plant that is owned by its affiliate, First Gas Power Corp.

If indeed the cost of power it had contracted was cheaper, then why is the PPA of Meralco going up while its purchase of electricity from the Napocor going down?

In September, Meralco collected P2.77 per kwh in PPA from its customers followed by P2.87 per kwh the next month, and P3 per kwh in November. By December, the PPA of Meralco had reached P3.13 per kwh, then P3.25 per kwh in January and then to P3.23 per kwh in February.

More expensive

Contrary to claims, the power generated by Meralco affiliates is more expensive compared with the Napocor’s rate of P4.1326 per kwh.

Based on the rates as of January, electricity from Quezon Power costs P5.2748 per kwh at the contracted level of 192 megawatts, power from Sta. Rita is worth P4.1343 per kwh at 500 megawatts.

Even if Meralco would utilize its power producers at full capacity, Quezon Power at P4.8 per kwh and Sta. Rita at P4.09 per kwh would still be more expensive compared with the Napocor’s rate of P4.0517 per kwh if Meralco would only honor its 10-year contract with the state-run firm.

Meralco was supposed to buy 3,600 megawatts of electricity from the Napocor for 10 years until 2004.

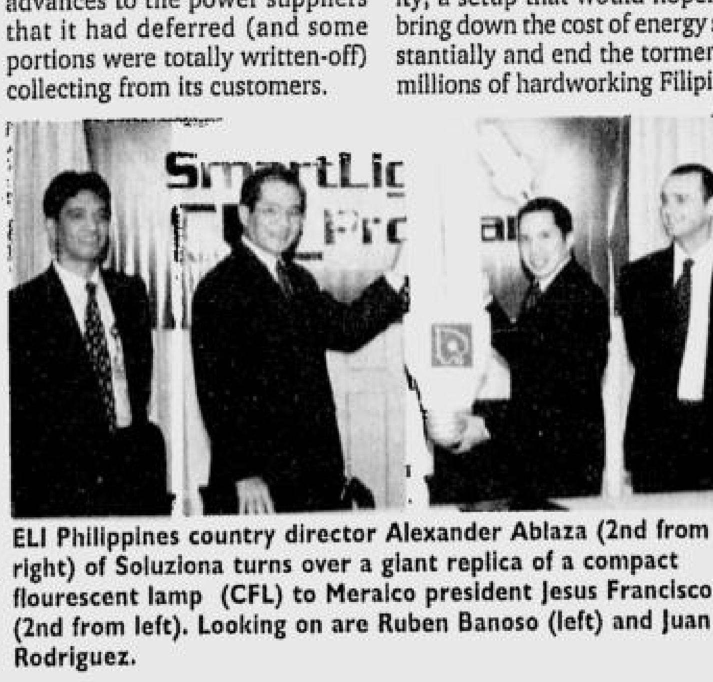
But it had insisted on ignoring its commitment and contracting power from other sources, putting its interest at conflict because an electricity distributor should normally not own or be affiliated to a power generating plant as Meralco does.

Francisco, however insisted that if Meralco would be allowed to buy all of the power from their own energy producers, the rates would be P3.50 per kwh for the Sta. Rita and P3.90 per kwh for Quezon Power.

“The Napocor sells us power at P4.30 per kwh as compared with our two plants where we can generate savings for consumers of about 60 centavos per kwh. We will pay Napocor the wheeling charges (the cost of using its transmission lines),” he says.

Now, Meralco wants the 10-year supply contract with the Napocor revised to a lower level but a longer period.

A Napocor source, however, says that by 2005, any supply contract is no longer applicable because the power sector would already allow open access of electricity, a setup that would hopefully bring down the cost of energy substantially and end the torment of millions of hardworking Filipinos.



ELI Philippines country director Alexander Ablaza (2nd from right) of Soluziona turns over a giant replica of a compact flourescent lamp (CFL) to Meralco president Jesus Francisco (2nd from left). Looking on are Ruben Banoso (left) and Juan Rodriguez.

Changing landscape of insurance

From page C3

immediate consequence was the tightening of security checks at airports and reduced traveling not only in the United States but worldwide which caused grave financial losses to the airline industry, necessitating direct assistance by their respective governments.

This situation has actually given the professional intermediaries, brokers and top general agents more opportunities to augment their brokerage or commission income provided that they were able to satisfactorily convince their valued clients to continue their insurance placements, but this had to be buttressed by technical competence and value-added service.

Undoubtedly, it is expected that the gross premium volume of the non-life sector of the Philippine market will rise in the year 2002. Will this extremely hard market prevail? Traditionally, reinsurance rates are cyclical in nature, and some experts predict a minimum period of two years as it will depend on the future loss experience of the lead global reinsurers and provided there are no subsequent terroristic acts similar to the magnitude of the World Trade Center disaster. In other words, it’s a seller’s market.

Another personal perception is that the present situation gives the global reinsurers the rare opportunity to recover quickly from their losses as this will not last forever. Besides, reinsurers are still in the process of completing tabulation of their final exact losses and have to cooperate among themselves because settlement of retrocession claims has yet to be resolved.

Enron case

I have been requested to touch on the Enron affair, which has been in the news for the past several weeks. The collapse of Enron Corp. and the dismemberment of Arthur Anderson, its external auditor, have seriously impacted on professional liability (errors and omissions) and directors and officers liability coverages resulting in the sharp escalation of insurance rates. The growing emphasis on corporate governance and transparency clearly shows that the biggest risk in huge corporations is the lack of integrity of its executive officers and sadly too, of the accounting profession. Specifically, the Enron case involves a $1 billion plus worth of surety bonds and these guaranteed delivery of oil and natural gas to trading companies backed by a well-known investment banking institution. When Enron defaulted on its obligations, this institution sued a group of 11 top American Insurers who have denied the claim on the basis of willful misrepresentation on the nature of the transactions guaranteed. This conflict will definitely have to be settled in court.

Adding to the misery of insurers are their losses from investments in Enron Corp. whose price per share in the stock exchange plummeted downward by over 90 percent including potential claims under directors and officers liability policies. All in all, it is estimated that Enron will cost insurers $4 billion to $5 billion dollars. Philippine surety underwriters should take note of this case and be guided accordingly. Insurance companies should likewise underwrite carefully all applications for directors and officers liability cover especially of those corporations listed in the stock exchange as well as that of accounting firms. Still another concern is the professional liability coverage for doctors and hospitals which should be underwritten judiciously and rated properly because there are rising incidents of negligence and malpractice reported in medical circles.

On the other hand, the life insurance sector was less volatile. Although the number of deaths in the Sept. 11 incidents was significant, the claims under individual and group policies were expeditiously settled by life insurers. The downturn of the global economy and the falling prices of the stock market securities and values of real estate property have had a toll on the financials of many global life insurers. In the ’90s or the previous decade, there was a wave of mergers and acquisitions but in the new millennium, the wave has slowed down and we now see ambitious conglomerates divesting non-performing acquisitions and returning to their core business.

In the Philippine scenario, liberalization of the insurance market has led to the entry some 16 new foreign players of worldwide stature either on a stand-alone basis or in joint venture mainly with banks. Today, five of these players have either withdrawn from the market or have sold their interest to other insurers. Will there be pullouts in the near future? Only time will tell but the indications are that there will be more.

On June 30, 2002, all Philippine life and non-life companies are directed by the Department of Finance in its Order No. 31-01 to maintain a maximum paid-up capital of P50 million or their operational licenses will not be renewed by the Insurance Commission. It is therefore projected that quite a number of non-life insurers most of which are family-owned may not be able or are unwilling to put up the additional capital and surplus requirements. As it is, the perception is that there are far too many insurers in the Philippines in proportion to the market potential. From the global perspective, the paid-up capital of a majority of Philippine Insurers is miniscule and inadequate even in comparison with its Asean neighbors.

Other factor

The other factor that will impact on the life sector is the convergence of financial institutions and the use of information technology. It is common knowledge that the agency system is the dominant force in the Philippine life insurance industry. However, questions are being raised as to its cost efficiency and its ability to meet the increasing demands of the insuring. The emergence of alternative distribution channels such as bancassurance, the Internet, direct mail and call centers is beginning to have an impact on the market. Other investment products such as mutual funds and deposit instruments are now being considered by the knowledgeable insurance buyer.

The concept of wealth management is gaining ground where all financial products including insurance will be made available under one roof or a one-stop shop usually a bank. It is therefore incumbent for the professional life agents to upgrade the quality of their financial advisory services in order to address the competition of a converging financial market. As a matter of fact, bancassurance is becoming more visible and one foreign joint venture life insurance company in partnership with a leading bank has seen its bancassurance strategy increase its share of their total premium volume to more than 50 percent. Other life insurers with banking partners are now giving serious attention to this channel and maximizing their customer data bank.

Agency system

Will all these movements affect the agency system? Not in the near future but for your information in certain European countries notably France and Portugal, the share of bancassurance is more than 50 percent of their markets whilst in Singapore it has now reached 16 percent and nearby Hong Kong has reported increasing gains by bank-owned insurance companies notably HSBC. Even banks through their credit card data base are marketing life insurance and personal accident products via direct mail which translates into more economical acquisition costs for the insurers. Sales of insurance products through the Internet is relatively new and have not yet taken off. In due time, the successful generation of the information age is expected to tap this distribution channel to look for the insurance coverages that best suit their needs and budgets.

All of these happenings are warning signals to the agency system to shape up and restrategize but the true professional life insurance agent will certainly take the necessary measures to competitively cope with the challenges of the alternative distribution channels.

In closing, let me highlight the important role of risk management in today’s uncertain times. An effective insurance system, both life and non-life, requires sound risk management techniques.

Not too long ago, these straightforward and simple risk management measures like identification, evaluation, control and transfer of risk were considered adequate by insurance institutions to optimize retained premium income, minimize losses and maintain financial soundness and stability. Now that the world had become more complicated and new sources of risk exposures have emerged which constantly change both in nature and dimension and at ever increasing pace, it is imperative for insurers and reinsurers to enhance further their capabilities in risk management and be flexible as they should cope with managing exposures from the perspective of a business enterprise.

While the principal function of insurance is to provide protection for assets, interruption of income and legal liability, they must now consider operational, credit, financial and market risks as an entrepreneur in order to meet the challenges of a volatile world. To mitigate losses it is now necessary to advocate greater loss prevention and control, emergency and business continuity planning for all sectors of society.

(Speech presented at the Symposium of the General Insurance Agents Association of the Philippines on May 11, 2002.)

Making doctors manage customer relations

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

DOCTORS are some of the more affluent members of Philippines society. However they are not really at the top list of people who adopt best practices.

How many doctors, for example, treat their patients as customers who need to be pleased and well-taken care of? How many doctors use the appointment system to ensure that patients do not have to wait hours before they are checked? How many doctors arrive at their clinics in time for their specified clinic hours?

One hospital is attempting to make doctors more than just medical practitioners. It is instituting a culture where the patient is the "god" of the doctors and not the other way around.

"We want to make sure we serve the patients well by making them the priority and providing service satisfaction," says Dr. Rodrigo B. Floro, VP for Medical Affairs of the newly opened Asian Hospital and Medical Center.

GARCIA

At the heart of the management system of the P4-billion hospital is a Quality Assurance Program adopted from the Japanese.

"You treat everyone as members of a team. The manager is now the facilitator," Dr. Floro explains.

Under the program is the Peer Review scheme for the doctors and the Customers Satisfaction Survey and a Credential System.

Under the Peer Review, the doctors in Asian Hospital will be reviewed by their colleagues based on a set of standards drawn up by the hospital, and if a doctor is deemed to have performed below the standards, he will be asked to leave.

Founding chair of Asian Hospital, Dr. Jorge Garcia says doctors who want to practice at Asian Hospital will be given a temporary privilege to practice for a year after which their performance will be reviewed before they are fully accepted.

This will apply even to the doctors who bought clinics in the medical center of the hospital.

"The investment or buying of shares has nothing to do with the way doctor will be given credentials. It will only be according to the quality of work you do," says Dr. Floro.

"Otherwise what will happen is that if you have the money, you can get in," he adds.

FLORO

Dr. Floro adds that Asian Hospital will be working for a Joint Commission Accreditation Healthcare Organization, which is the accrediting body of the United States for hospitals. Such accreditation will immediately put Asian Hospital at par with American hospitals, considered as the best in the world.

On the issue of doctors setting up an appointments system, Asian Hospital officials admit they are working at it.

"We are trying very hard to introduce the appointment system here. Many doctors know this is a practice outside the Philippines," states Evelyn R. Singson, chair of Asian Hospital.

She says she has also been a victim of waiting long hours outside a doctor's office and adds that while "this is a tradition that is difficult to change, it might be easier to introduce best practices and pick out the best and employ these in the hospital."

Dr. Garcia adds that waiting long hours for a doctor is "not acceptable to us. We know we will be ruffling some feathers but we will have a culture of punctuality."

Drs. Floro and Garcia are both US-based who still shuttle between the United States and Manila for their practice.

Dr. Garcia is part of the Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., while Dr. Floro practices medicine in Little Company of Mary Hospital in Illinois and is a colonel of the US Air Force Reserve. The two have been friends since their medical study days at the University of Sto. Tomas.

Asian Hospital opened quietly last March and had its inauguration last May 11 with President Macapagal-Arroyo as guest of honor.

It is considered as the first major medical facility built in the country in more than 25 years.

Its goal is to provide healthcare services not just in the Philippines but in the entire region.

"Our vision is to create the best practice hospital in the Philippines and eventually in the Asia-Pacific region," says Dr. Garcia. And in order to achieve this we have gathered the best equipment and the best doctors together to bring world-class healthcare delivery closer to Filipinos."

The aim of the hospital is to provide a non-hospital atmosphere in the institution. It has tapped the services of hotel experts to provide the kind of services in traditional hospitality businesses.

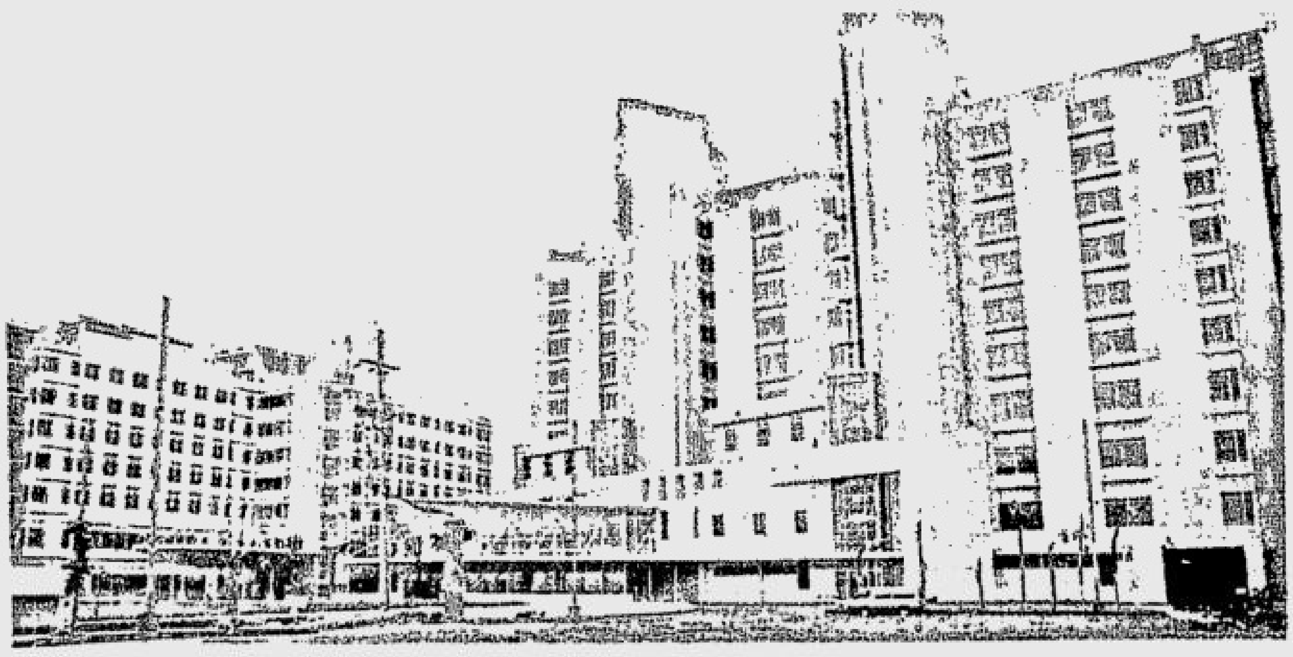
The hospital is located at the Filinvest Corporate City in Alabang and has an initial 258-bed capacity and is equipped with advanced medical facilities.

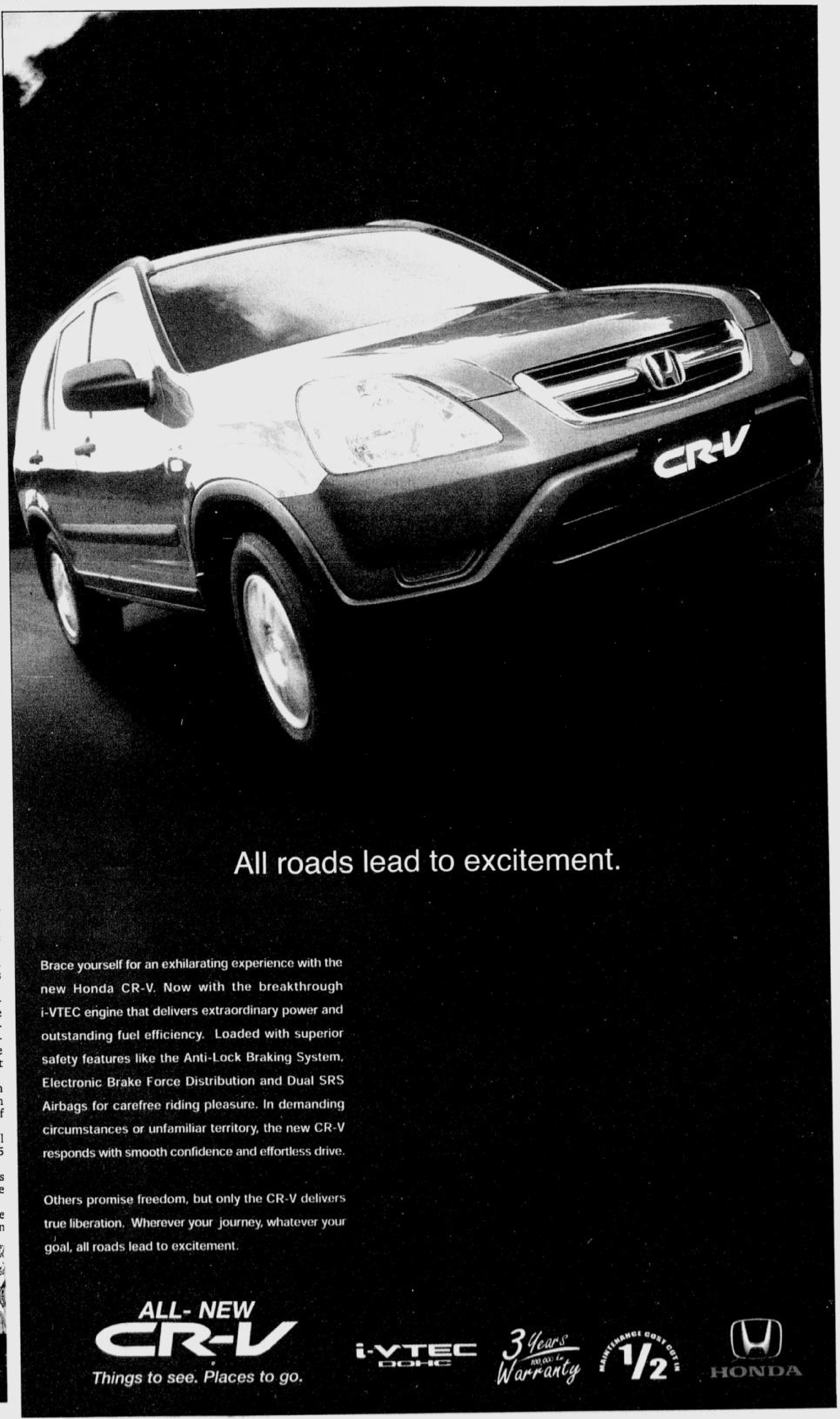
Among its field of specialization are cardiovascular surgery, pediatrics, physical therapy and rehabilitation, and laparoscopic surgery.

Asian Hospital now has one of the most expensive hospital suites with its P15,000 Presidential Suite.

It recently launched its executive checkup packages which range from P5,300 to P37,000.

THE LOBBY is at par with a hotel's.


THE HOSPITAL had a price tag of P4 billion.



Brace yourself for an exhilarating experience with the new Honda CR-V. Now with the breakthrough i-VTEC engine that delivers extraordinary power and outstanding fuel efficiency. Loaded with superior safety features like the Anti-Lock Braking System, Electronic Brake Force Distribution and Dual SRS Airbags for carefree riding pleasure. In demanding circumstances or unfamiliar territory, the new CR-V responds with smooth confidence and effortless drive.

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People, Events & Products
Aries Espinosa, Editor aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Unilever, Domex support gov't environment campaign

UNILEVER Philippines, a manufacturer of leading home and personal care products, took part in the recently concluded Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran, a Presidential award given to the cleanest and greenest local government units nationwide. Its primary intention is to instill in the minds of Filipinos the values of discipline, self-reliance, resourcefulness, cooperation, cleanliness and environmental awareness, as well as to help transform rural and urban areas all over the country into clean and green communities that are healthy and present to live in.

The nationwide search started in 1994, with the national awards committee headed by the Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government and co-chaired by the national president of the Regional Emergency Action Communication Teams (Phils.). The vice chair for the committee is the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, with the chair and CEO of Unilever Phils. as co-vice chair. Members are the Department of Tourism, Department of Health, Department of Education, Philippine Information Agency, the Presidential Management Staff and Clean and Green Foundation Inc.

Unilever's all-around home cleaner brand, Domex, sponsored the Cleanest Public Market Restroom Award given to the finalists of the Panlungsod Category of the Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran. The objective of the Cleanest Public Restroom Award is to recognize the best and well-kept restroom in the public markets. This award stresses the importance of cleanliness because restrooms represent a basic form of hygiene and cleanliness for every person.

For 2001, the award was pioneered in the City Category, choosing the awardees from the finalists of the Highly Urbanized City Category and the Component City Category. It was Angeles City in Pampanga and Roxas City in Capiz, Negros Occidental who won the awards for each category, respectively.

The trophies were awarded by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in awarding ceremonies held in Malacañang recently. Domex provided the winners with a one-year supply of Domex Thick to keep their public restrooms clean.

Unilever Philippines has been part of the national awards committee and the national board of judges since 1994. It is the only private sector representative in the committee board. Unilever's participation is a confirmation of the company's commitment to the improvement of the environment.

U 75
Domex
Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran
preciation Dinner
Award

Shown is Hon. Milagros Viterbo (Roxas City) during the symbolic turnover of prizes with (from left) Chito Macapagal, GM, corporate development, Unilever, Trish Niles, Domex brand manager, Unilever, Howard Belton, chair and CEO, Unilever, and Director Rolando Acosta (DILG).

MCCANN FORGES CASTING ALLIANCE

Top advertising agency McCann-Erickson Philippines recently welcomed casting partner Talentworks Asia into its service family. The first contract of its kind in the industry, the deal gives Talentworks Asia the exclusive task of handling the talent requirements of clients for both McCann and its subsidiary Harrison Communications. Led by top celebrity manager Girlie Rodis, Talentworks takes pride in handling the careers of celebrities like the Cojuangco sisters Mikee, Maimai and China, Rachel Alejandro, Cris Villonco, Geneva Cruz and sports personalities Benjie Paras and Vince Hizon. This innovative partnership is expected to give better value to McCann's clients and set a precedent in the advertising industry. Shown seated, from left, are Emily Abrera, chair of McCann-Erickson Phils., Ricki Arches, president and CEO of McCann, and Girlie Rodis, president of Talentworks Asia. Standing from left are Lorna Moreno, casting manager for Talentworks, Joey Valenzuela, senior vice president for McCann, and Cecile Litonjua, business development director for Talentworks.

BITS Clips

Eye expert lectures at St. Luke's

DR. ADRIAN Koh, a distinguished vitreo-retina consultant at the Singapore National Eye Center (SNEC), will share his experiences in photodynamic therapy (PDT) and the injectable drug Visudyne (verteporfin) in a workshop-symposium on Friday, May 24, at the second floor conference room of St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City. The event is divided into two parts and coincides with the launch of the St. Luke's Photodynamic Therapy Center. There will be an interactive flourescein angiography workshop in the morning followed by a PDT workshop in the afternoon. PDT or laser therapy is a new treatment for the wet form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a disease that affects 30 million people worldwide and is the leading cause of blindness in people over 50. It is used together with Visudyne, the first clinically proven drug for subfoveal AMD that stops further vision loss. The drug was introduced recently by Novartis Opthalmics. For details, call 840-5667.

Umapas Clan sets reunion

THE UMAPAS clan will hold its first Umapas Clan reunion/convention on May 20 and 21 at the Buli Elementary School grounds, Barangay Buli, Bato, Northern Leyte. According to event organizer Edwin Umapas, this year's theme would be "Acquaintance, Unity and Solidarity." Its objectives include the coming up of an authentic family tree and a documented history of the clan. Highlighting the celebration would be the launching of the newly discovered Gunhuban Falls. Several clan members from abroad have already expressed their intent to join in the celebrations. Among them are Fely Umapas-Peñaranda, Hong Kong, Lita Umapas, Italy, Wennie Umapas and husband, United States, Manny Umapas and wife, Canada, and Olong Umapas, Indonesia. The Catharsis Band with Tata Umapas on drums, Edwin Umapas on keyboards and Weng Umapas on vocals will entertain on the second night. For more information, call Cora Umapas (821-7650, 0920-7559044), Weng Umapas at (032)255-7653, 0917-5462916, or Edwin Umapas at 0916-4859800.

Daet launches Pinyasan fest

THE MUNICIPALITY of Daet in the Bicol region recently launched the Grand Pinyasan Festival 2002. Conceptualized by then Councilor and now Daet municipal Mayor Tito Sarion, the 10th Pinyasan Festival will be held from June 15 to 24 in Daet, Camarines Norte.

The week-long festivity features a mobile display of Marikina shoe products, a beauty pageant, a food and agro-industrial fair, a cultural night, celebrity appearances by TV personalities Kristine Hermosa and Ara Mina and Miss Tourism International Michelle Reyes, and a host of other special events.

The Festival's highlight is a street-dancing parade on June 23 showcasing performers in pineapple-inspired costumes and will culminate on June 24 in time for the Feast of St. John the Baptist.

Sporting events include surfing exhibitions and competition, marathon, beach volleyball, cycling, paraw regatta, national air rifle open competition, mountain conquests, motocross tilt, sport fishing and indigenous games.

The sponsors of the week-long event are the Municipal Government of Daet, the Provincial Government of Camarines Norte, the Pacific Coast Resort Development Corp., the Camarines Norte Pineapple Festival Development Foundation, the Metro Daet Development Foundation, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Tourism, the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Philippine Conventions and Visitors Corp.

Situated some 300 km southeast of Manila, Daet is known nationwide as a producer of the queen or Formosa variety, which is considered among the sweetest pineapples in the world. Daet's tourist attractions include the Bagasbas Beach surfing area, the first monument of Dr. Jose Rizal built in 1898 by the revolutionaries, ancestral houses, old Spanish-period churches, and other natural attractions.

Isuzu SOS in Bicol

Diesel technology expert Isuzu Philippines Corp. goes to the field once again this May to give its patrons another run of its thriving Isuzu Special Off-Site Service (SOS). Customers in Bicol can avail themselves of Isuzu's world-class vehicle maintenance services and auto parts on May 20 to 22 at Peñafrancia Caltex Station along the Diversion Road, Tabaco, Naga City. Vehicle servicing will be done by Isuzu-trained technicians from IPC's parts and service department and Gencars Inc. The SOS will further stretch out to Legaspi City from May 23 to 25, with services made available at the Monasterio Caltex Station corner Lakandula and Peñaranda Streets. In both sites, Isuzu SOS also offers Besco oil for the Trooper's 4JX1 engine and Isuzu genuine oil for the Isuzu 4x4's Limited Slip Differentials (LSD).

Saving our wounded Earth

THERE can never be too many efforts to address the country's environmental problems, as they have reached critical levels in many areas. At the rate we have been destroying our forests and killing our rivers, it will take so much to start repairing the damage.

According to the latest Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI), a joint project of Yale University and World Environment Forum, the Philippines ranked 117th all over the world, the lowest, and one of the dirtiest countries among Southeast Asia. This shows that our country lags behind other countries in its overall environmental protection and conservation efforts.

With this, one thing that will help is for us Filipinos to realize that this situation is not helpless. Many positive things can still be done, and each little contribution we can make will make a difference.

That's exactly what the residents of Smokey Mountain did. With the help of socially responsive entities, they organized themselves into an environmental NGO and got going with a community waste management program that is now doing quite well. Before they knew it, Mga Anak ni Inang Daigdig (MAID) grew into a serious environmental advocacy group involved in projects for environmental rehabilitation.

By the last week of April, they launched a TV series titled "Daigdig na Sugatan (Wounded Earth)", with funding from corporations who share the concern for the environment and are themselves engaged in specific programs that address the problem. The series is in a fast-paced magazine format. It informs, educates, and makes people understand how the planet operates as a system and to convince them to take responsibility for taking care of it.

Spearheading the project is the parish priest of Smokey Mountain Fr. Ben Beltran, who is making sure that the TV program will not be talking over the heads of televiewers. His concern is to make the program informative, educational and entertaining. He has been going around to get people from different fields pledge for their commitment to save our environment. The list includes Bishop Soc Villegas, Bishop Orlando Quevedo of CBCP, Sen. Franklin Drilon, Sen. Loren Legarda-Leviste, Finance Secretary Jose Camacho, Gen. Leandro Mendoza, Gen. Diomedio Villanueva, Sharon Cuneta, Bayani Agbayani, and Gary Lim.

The TV series will feature President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, and top leaders from all branches of government, while the entertainment industry is represented by Sharon Cuneta, Aga Muhlach, Christopher de Leon, Jolina Magdangal, Kuh Ledesma, the Apo, Dina Bonnevie, Joey Ayala, Aiza Seguerra, Geneva Cruz and Chin-Chin Gutierrez. More personalities will be joining as the series unfolds, with some even doing musical numbers.

"Daigdig na Sugatan airs on RPN 9 every Sunday from 2 to 3 p.m. The series started April 21, and is sponsored by Bayer Philippines, LandBank of the Philippines, TotalFinaElf Philippines, WG&A Philippines, Nestle Philippines, Pagcor, and Shangri-La Plaza Corp.

Product FILES

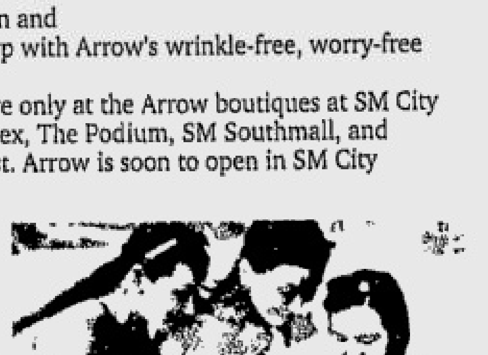
Arrow introduces ready tie, wrinkle-free shirt

ARROW, the renowned US men's brand, introduces another first—the innovative Ready Tie. It is pre-knotted for utmost convenience and backed up by a zipper for easy use. Created with the most modern designs and made of European fabrics, the Arrow Ready Tie is perfect to keep up with the exhilarating lifestyle of the executive who is always on the go.

And this goes perfectly well with Arrow's wrinkle-free shirts and polos. They are made from 100-percent cotton and come in various colors like blue, green and yellow. So dress sharp with Arrow's wrinkle-free, worry-free apparel.

Get these and more only at the Arrow boutiques at SM City Manila, SM City Annex, The Podium, SM Southmall, and Robinsons Metro East. Arrow is soon to open in SM City Pampanga.

Summer escapade



MODELS Colleen de Guzman, Aileen Mabunay and Anne Yasay partake of a box of Dunkin Donuts at a Subic Bay beach resort. The food chain launched recently its 'Tag-Init Treat!' as a special summer offer. One can take advantage of the P120 discounted price for a dozen donuts, a savings of up to P33, until May 20.

AUTO EXTREME LAUNCH REVS UP CROWD

An eye-popping display of some of the country's most luxurious sedans, sports cars and truly classic vintage cars created a crowd-pleasing stir at the Fort Bonifacio Global City last May 4. 'Auto Extreme', which airs every Saturday at 4 p.m. on RPN 9, made sure its launch event also provided a venue for private car collectors to display their own prized machines, including a 1949 Mercedes Benz 170, a 1955 Ford Thunderbird, a 2000 Harley Davidson Heritage Soft Tail, a BMW Z3 coupe, and even a Humvee. The participants included Audi, BMW, Ford, Honda, Jaguar, Mitsubishi, Porsche, Volkswagen and Volvo. All the hosts of the show were on hand to answer questions from the guests at the exclusive cocktails held at Hot Rod Bar and Café at The Fort. The hosts, led by the striking Tisha Silang (left) and radio DJ Mondo gave a glimpse of the kind of youthful repartee the viewers can look forward to in the show.

3M LAUNCHES ASTHMA TREATMENT

3M Pharmaceuticals introduced an innovative inhaler drug for asthma at the recently concluded Philippine Convention of Chest Physicians (PCCP) at the Edsa Shangri-la Hotel. 3M Pharmaceutical's Beclomethasone dipropionate HFA is the first asthma inhaler designed to deliver an extra-fine aerosol that allows the drug to reach the smaller airways of the lungs. This innovative feature translates into more effective asthma control at half the dose of other corticosteroids. Shown (front row, from left) are T. Alix, 3M Pharma country manager, N. Beltran, 3M senior product manager, and the officers and members of PCCP (third from left) Dr. P.T. Mansukhani, Dr. J.R. Mendoza-Wi, Dr. A.H. Villalon, Dr. M.M. Juco, Dr. G.L. Alvarado, A.D. Saturnino, 3M sales specialist, and Dr. R.C. Zotomayor. For more information, call 3M Pharma through the QVAR hotline 813-3781 to 89 or visit www.3M.com/qvar.

Caring can make . . .

From page C8

P300 million. This was increased to P450 million with the knowledge that the gestation period for a newcomer in life insurance is at least five years.

"We have a very large war chest. That's why we're confident enough to invest heavily in market penetration initiatives," says Kenn Ramirez, NYLIP vice president for agency distribution. The company is spending heavily on expanding its agency sales force while making sure that it continues to make inroads in the market through strategic alliances. It's a gamble, but one that is hedged heavily in favor of the cash-rich insurer.

Indeed, the size of the company's kitty is showing. According to the Insurance Commission, NYLIP was one of the more prominent investors in February.

Emphasis on learning

George May credits the company's success to its orientation toward nurturing people for growth. An accomplished scuba instructor, May continues to train, in Anilao Batangas, prospective divers, who are unable to afford "tuition" to become dive masters and help them obtain jobs in local resorts, despite his responsibilities as the president and chief executive officer of the global company. The way I train people for diving is much the same way I approach people at New York Life, May says. "If I were to sum it up—and this goes back to diving as an example when I train and I teach—if I do something for you, you have an obligation to do something for someone less fortunate than you," he adds.

"And at New York Life, we don't punish people for making mistakes," the heavily built executive gently stresses. "Obviously if I see them going into a wall I stop them. But they've got to learn by making mistakes." Ultimately, May asserts, the people are the assets of the company. "It's not the money in the bank, it's the people."

The rest of the management agree. Karen Manzo, senior marketing manager, attests to the company's emphasis on learning. Everyone is given a chance to succeed in this company," she says.

And the strategy has been working because it has fostered a highly entrepreneurial culture among the employees and sales agents. We have seen stellar performances from people that other companies would not have accepted into their work force.

"We take chances on people," attests Kenn Ramirez, "that's why we've seen success in the most unexpected places."

May says that another factor that has helped NYLIP grow has been the company's start-up mentality. New York Life people moved into three different offices within the span of 10 months.

The company started out in Oakwood in Makati, stayed there for five months, then moved out to Ortigas. NYLIP only moved to its Makati office in June 2002. "We didn't start out like other multinationals do. We had to really start from scratch," says Manzo, "and we continue to imbibe the dynamism of a start-up."

People-centered philosophy

But ultimately, May attests, our success boils down to the fact that at the end of the day, "we can look at ourselves in the mirror. We challenge our people, we work very hard, but at the end of the day we care for them. What makes the difference is them."

May says that Filipinos are, "without a doubt, the hardest working people I have found." This is evident, May claims, in the company's performance in the last 10 months. That's one reason why New York Life's Philippine operation will become one of the strongest in Asia, beating more mature operations in countries such as Taiwan and India at the "Asia Challenge Cup," an annual competition conducted by New York Life for its Asia Pacific units. "Our performance was phenomenal for such a young unit," May adds.

Doy Roque

Changing the look of beef in the US

CHICAGO—Beef may be what's for dinner, according to the popular TV ad, but in the future it may be for breakfast, lunch and snacks too.

After decades of believing that consumers will buy beef simply because it is beef, cattle industry leaders in the 1990s realized that consumers were rapidly shunning it in favor of versatile and easy-to-prepare chicken products.

That realization led to the creation of R. and D. Ranch, a cattle-industry research kitchen in downtown Chicago devoted to the testing and development of new beef items for homes, taverns, restaurants, snack counters and on-the-go consumers.

Today that kitchen has helped launch hundreds of new beef products and is working to launch many more. Called value-added products because of the extra processing that is needed, these items are aimed at spreading beef's popularity way beyond fast-food restaurants, barbecue grills and home dinners.

"In 1995, our idea of a value-added product was a hamburger," Carl Blackwell, executive director of R. and D. Ranch said, explaining the beef industry's late start in developing new products.

Now value-added beef products may have names like "Cheeseburger Fries" and "Flat-iron Steak."

The Cheeseburger Fries are a snack food that is a blend of ground beef and cheese molded into a french-fry form with a crispy coating. The finger-held snack was recently tested at a college bar near Northwestern University with good results.

The Flat-iron Steak is from the chuck portion of beef that for years had been made into roasts. Grilled like a T-bone or sirloin, it is available now in restaurants and stores, and developers hope it will become popular with steak enthusiasts.

"We are working with a small processor in Reno, Nevada, that wants to come up with a beef ham," Blackwell said.

Work is also under way to create beef items for deli cases and rotisseries.

"Over 1 billion rotisserie chickens are sold in the retail deli each year," Betty Hogan, director of new product development, said. "There is no beef there, so something needed to be done."

R. and D. Ranch

Opened in 1998, R. and D. Ranch spends from $3 million to $4 million yearly working with food companies to develop and market new beef products that will compete with chicken, are quick to fix, taste good and are nutritious. The money comes from the cattle industry's checkoff program that collects $1 from every head of cattle sold.

The beef industry's race to recapture market share will be difficult, considering it has been behind for years. In 2002, the US government estimates each American will eat 66.8 pounds of beef compared with 78.5 pounds of chicken.

"When I first started, we had to really get out there and establish credibility," Blackwell said. "We had to bring in quality people and prove ourselves."

Reuters

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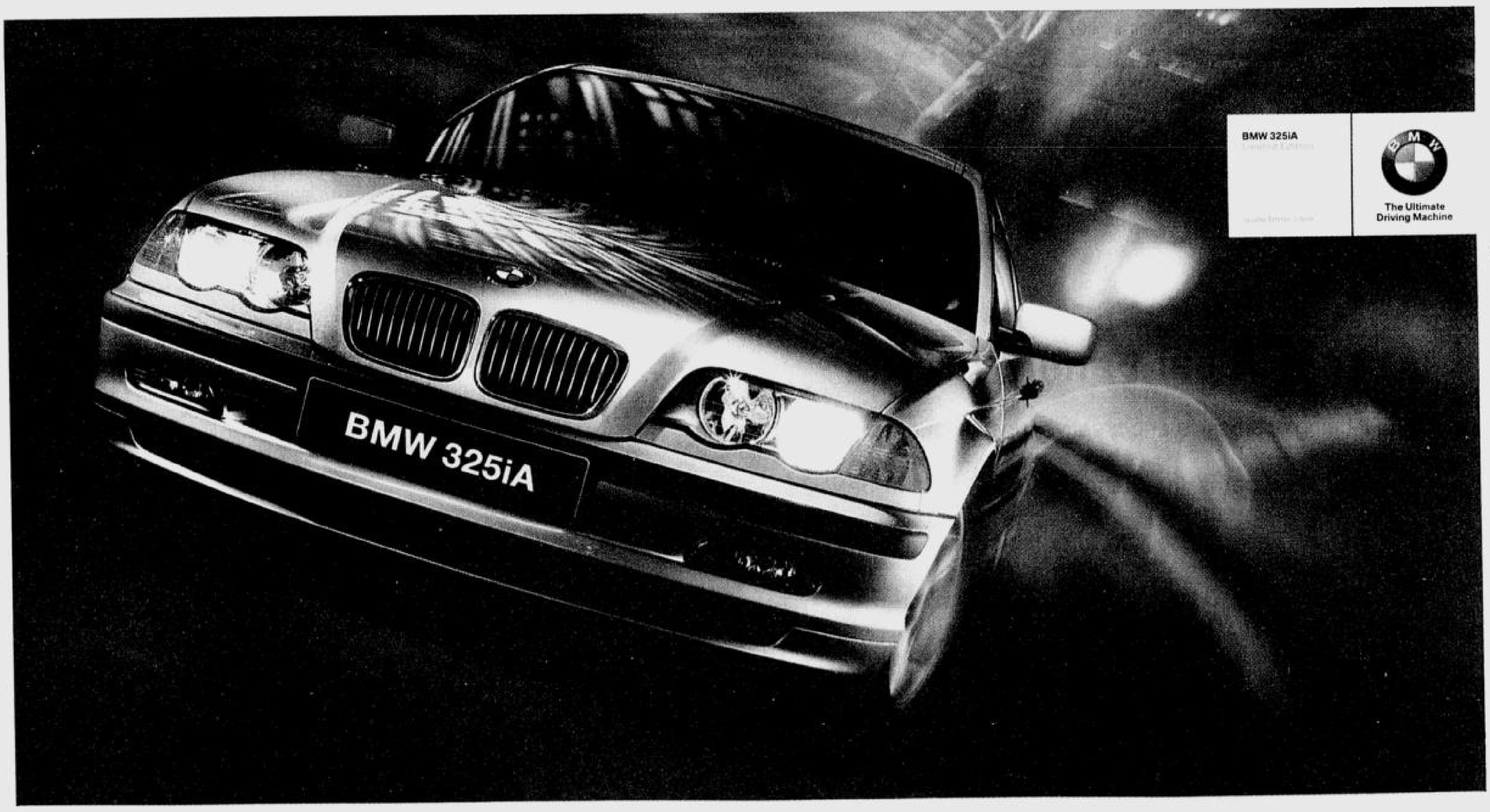

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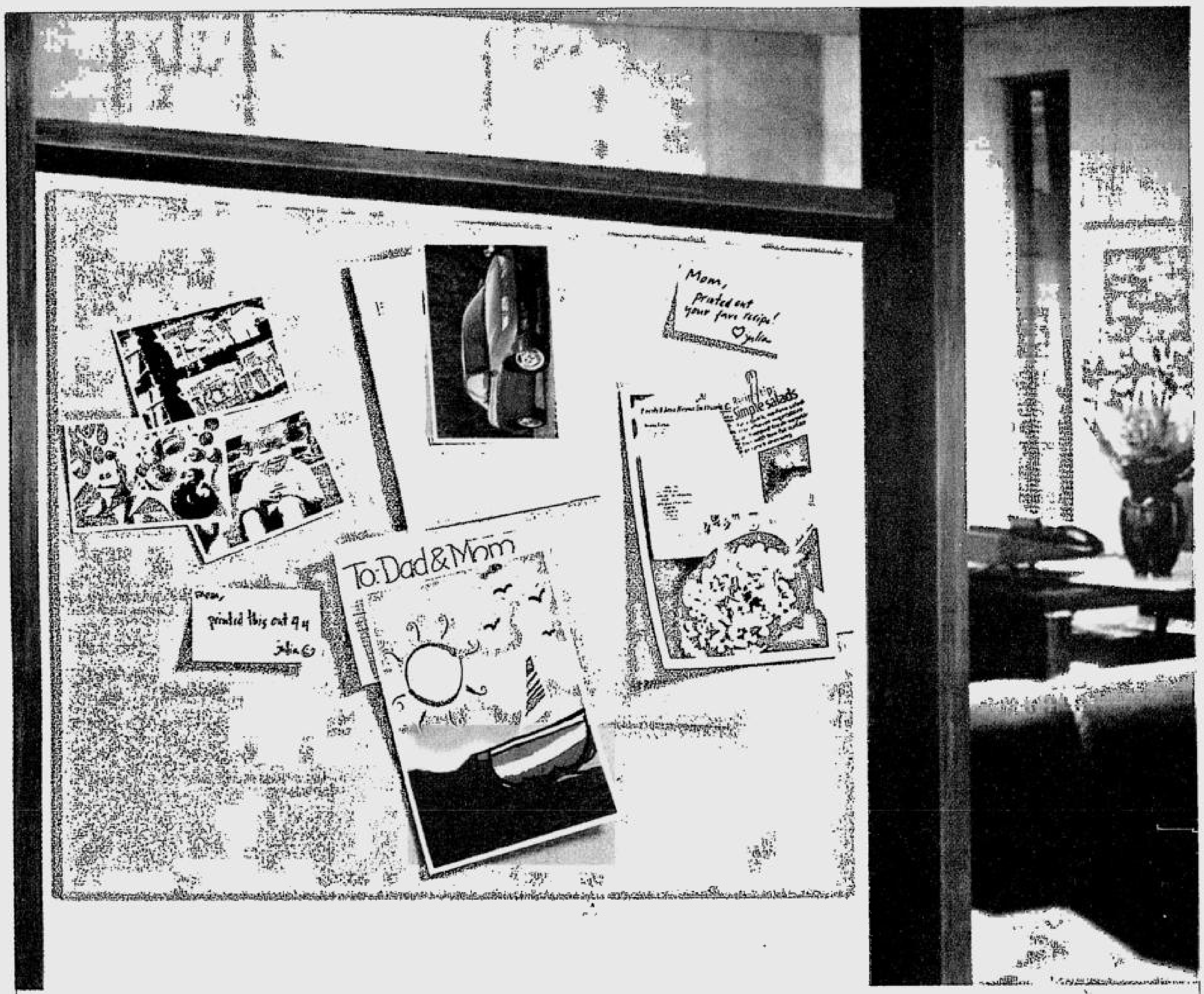

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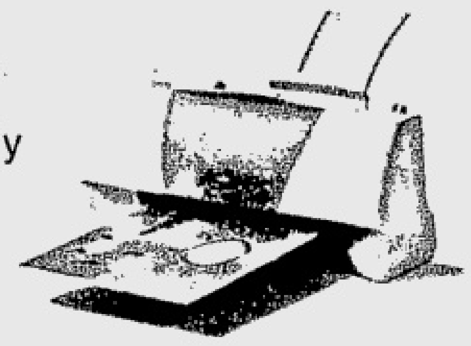

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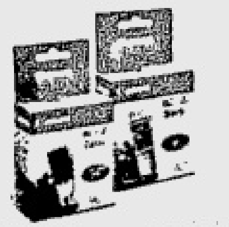	BC1-21 Black BC1-21 Color	₱255.00 ₱535.00

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MAY

Caring can make the difference

THE COOL blue hues of New York Life's headquarters in Makati belie the frenetic pace of work at the new life insurer.

Enter the CEO's office and you are greeted with more evidence of the company's unspoken ethos—composure amid a flurry of internal activity.

George May's corner office is the source of all this activity. Inside the mid-sized office, one will find a spacious desk, a modest bookcase, and a small conference table. The room is understated except for a pair of Harman Kardon speakers, and a picture of the CEO's wife sporting a straw hat, quite a contrast to the personality the occupant exudes—intuitive, even mercurial.

The current shakedown in the life insurance sector only makes the company's growth even more admirable. NYLIP's expansion comes at a time when its competitors—international giants in their own right—are closing shop and leaving the country.

MetLife, the largest life insurance company in the United States, is shutting down Philippine operations less than two years after getting its license from the Insurance Commission. AEGON Life Insurance, the local subsidiary of the Dutch insurance giant, is now planning to pull out of the Philippines after World Marketing Alliance (WMA), its sole marketing partner in the country, shut down operations.

Aside from Metlife and AEGON, eight other insurers that have left the Philippines due to the tightening of insurance regulations and what many pundits say is an increasingly saturated market.

Resilience and market focus

May, however, is confident that the local market has not yet reached the point of saturation. "Market penetration in the Philippines is quite low compared to other countries in Asia."

This assumption is supported by the fact that less than one percent of the country's gross domestic product can be attributed to insurance. Taken with this measure, local penetration remains quite low compared to the United States' 4.3 percent and Japan's 8 percent, reveals consulting company NMG Group.

NYLIP's enthusiasm regarding the Philippine market is reflected in its goals. The company is looking at a Top 10 spot in the country's roster of life insurers in terms of size in the next five years. The insurer plans to do this with a combination of quality service through its agency sales force, and expanded reach through strategic marketing partnerships and innovative distribution channels.

Among its strategic alliances is a pact with CAP Life Philippines of the CAP Family of Companies. The partnership, a realization of the vision of both May and CAP president Enrique A. Sobrepeña Jr., initially offered personal accident insurance plan to key CAP sales associates. However, May sees the partnership growing to cover majority of the entire CAP's sales associates.

"Our differentiation really lies on the fact that we're multi-distributional, not mono-distributional," May stresses. NYLIP does not limit its distribution channel focus on agency sales. Instead, it focuses on a number of strategies including bancassurance and strategic marketing partnerships.

"The truth is, we don't have the luxury of going mono-distributional because we haven't had 50 years to build our agency sales force. So from the beginning our approach was: We need to capture market. How do we do that best—multiple distribution."

Marketing alliance

NYLIP currently has a strategic marketing alliance with Allied Bank and is tying in with a telemarketing-direct marketing operation. Of course, the company's core base remains its agents. "We feel that by having that three-pronged approach, we will capture market. Of course make the company profitable, but while reaching as many Filipinos as possible," May adds.

But capturing market share costs money, and here is where NYLIP has an advantage over its competitors. The company got its working license from the Insurance Commission last August with a start-up capital of

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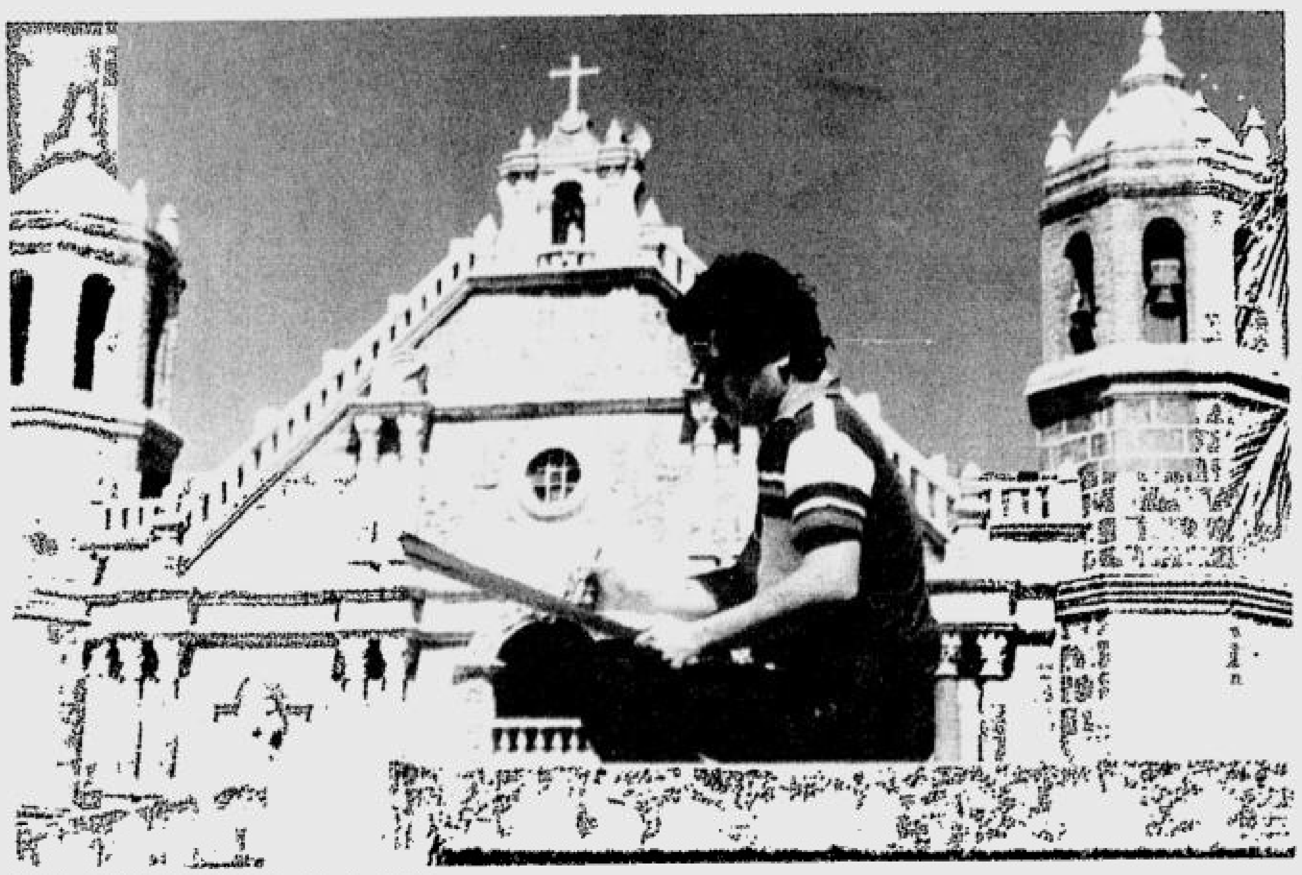
Piety and passion for the past



THE ARTIST painting in front of the church in Minalin, Pangasinan

Al Perez continues his romance with old Philippine churches but with a little bit of an experiment

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

ALL throughout his artistic life, the subject of churches has been a constant, the singular force that animates his art, linking his past to the present and thence to the future.

Born in Hagonoy, Bulacan, birthplace to many noted artists, and later growing up with his grandmother, who was a faithful churchgoer, he invariably imbibed at an early age the religious reverence of his folks, a quality which he nurtured with his own fascination for the resplendent images on the altar and the solid centuries-old buildings that house them.

Al Perez has, to this day, pursued his childhood reverence for churches with the same fervor and passion. In his numerous travels around the country and in sojourns abroad, he has, to date, painted hundreds of them, from the historic Barasoain Church in Malolos, Bulacan, and Paoay Church in Ilocos Norte to the centuries-old cathedrals in London, Paris, Belgium and Rome.

Backed up by extensive research on the hagiography of baroque churches, he has ably captured in various media, from aquarelle to acrylic, the character of these splendid structures that serve as landmarks of every town and province in the country.

In his sixth solo exhibit at the 139 Gallery of SM Megamall (May 23-June 8), Perez, who finished Fine Arts at the University of Santo Tomas, has mounted a new suite of paintings in mixed media on Philippine baroque churches. Their specific locations show the seemingly inexhaustible trove that the subject offers.

What may surprise gallerygoers long familiar with his works is the new rendering in some of the pieces where Perez has obviously gone experimental with his collage-like, gestural treatment of the subject.

Innovations

The artist has

PIETY/ p.D2

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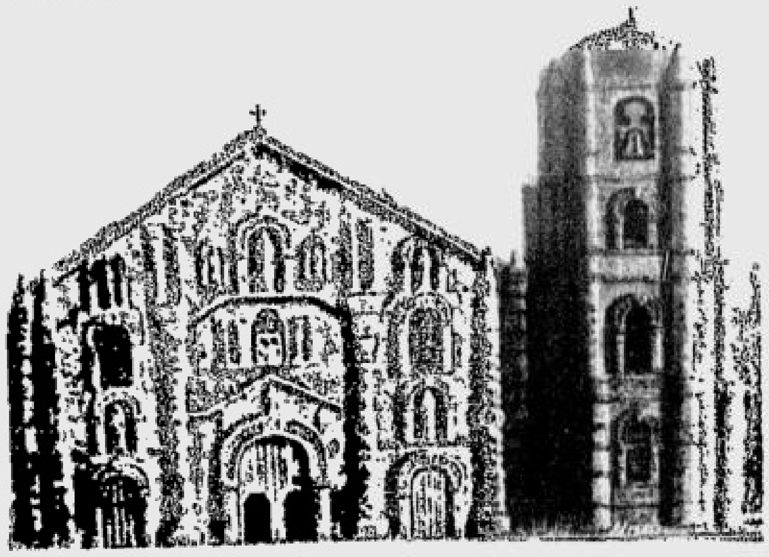


"DARAGA Church," acrylic on paper

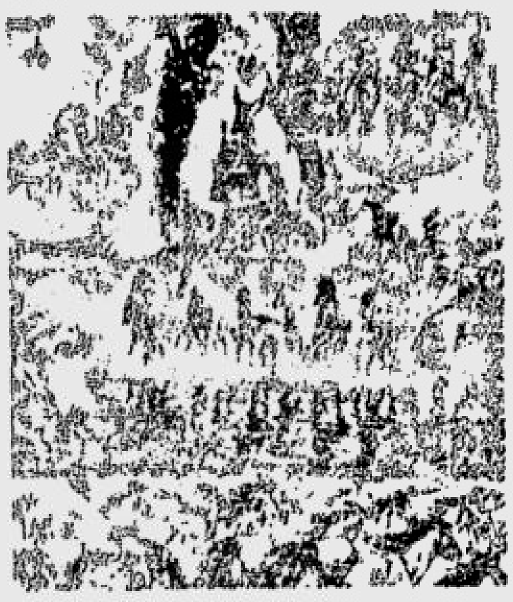
Piety and passion for the past

From page D1

made a number of worthy innovations to his metier, best interpreted as recent personal attempts to capture the subject in a new light, by incorporating the emblematic features of the interiors of churches. In "Sta. Elena," for instance, the images are façades of Miag-ao (Iloilo) and Barasoain Churches, as viewed from different perspectives, with the regal image of Sta. Elena (his favorite saint) directly on top of the composition. Strewn around the canvas are portions of those familiar paper cutouts and bits and pieces of rice paper, creating not only the essential textural element but the de rigeuer festive ambience that one associates with Philippine fiestas.

Perez has daringly pushed his experimental fervor in his other works as well, such as in "Jesus," where the main image is that of Christ on the Cross, which could otherwise have been a stereotype rendering of the subject, but which the artist jazzes up as a pop but religious icon worthy of awe and veneration. Here again, Perez has made extensive use of strips of paper around, looking more like a ticker tape presentation to honor the martyrdom of the Savior.

"THE YEAR of the Horse," acrylic on paper

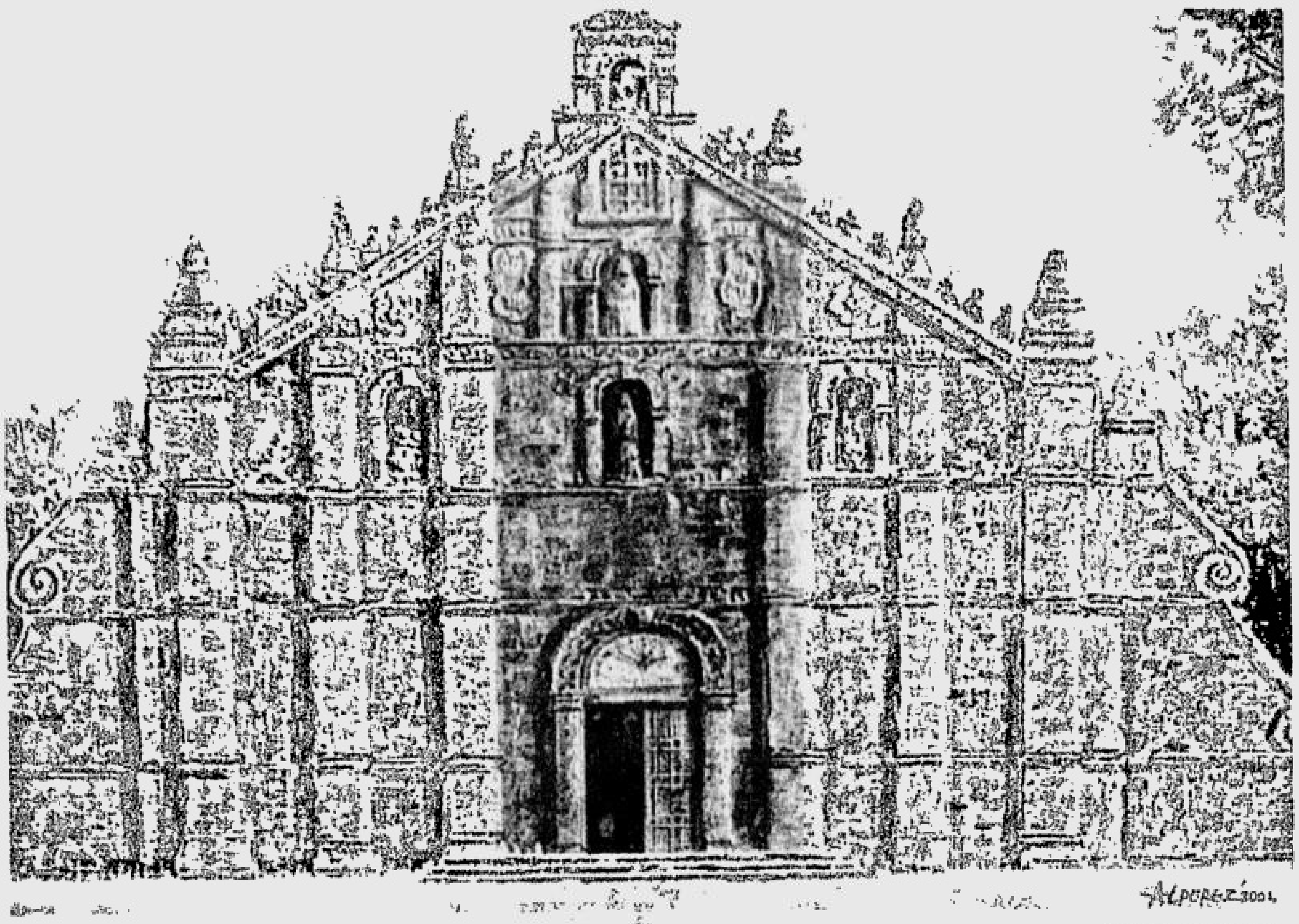


The effect comes off more admirably in "Angel de la Guardia," which shows an infant all curled up in his crib, while behind the babe a blinding ray of light is cast to reveal an angel directly hovering behind it, as the title implies. The tableau-like rendering is framed by decorative layers of creased rice paper, with gashes of lines powerfully streaming around it.

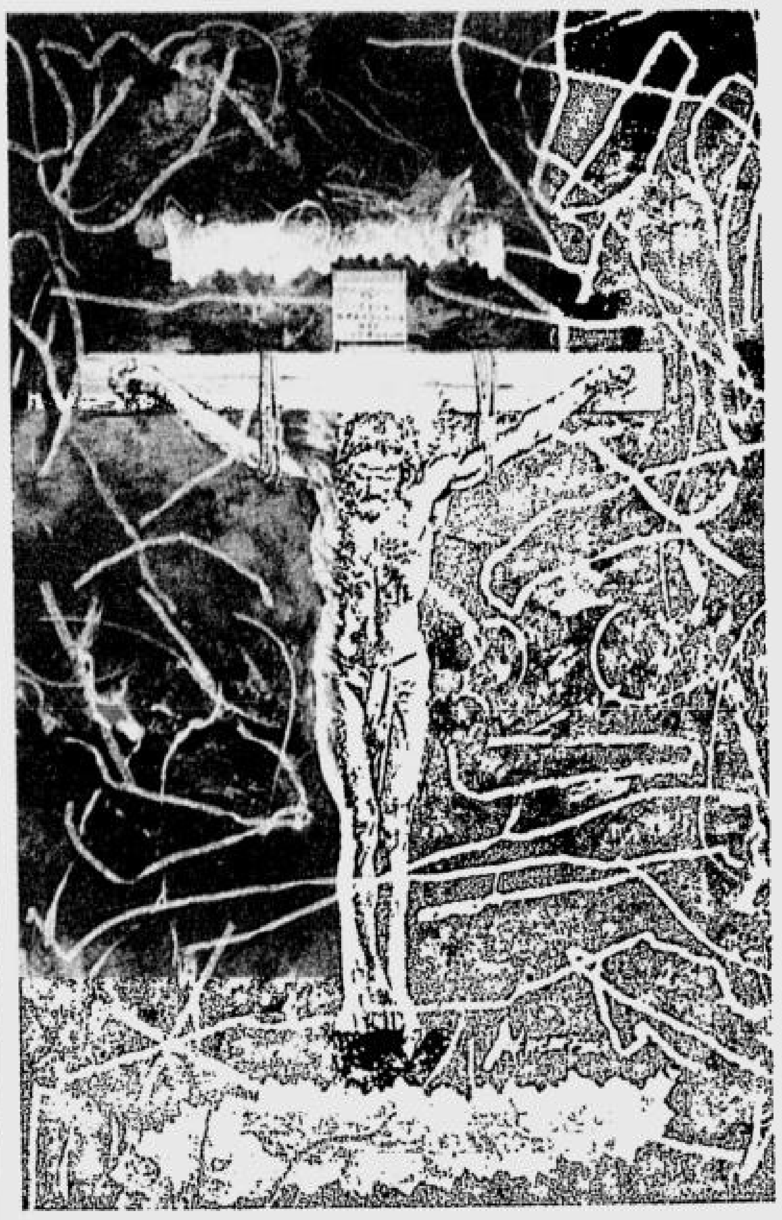
Perez, however, has not confined and his works to these reverential subjects. As in the past, where he proved that his metier goes beyond the confines of churches and cathedrals, he has thrown in a number of old houses, still lifes, koi in water, faces of clowns, even renderings of galloping stallions in frenzied movements, perhaps a long overdue welcome to the Year of the Horse.

In all these, the artist amply proves his trademark coloration, his delicate grasp of paint and brush, his advocacy for things old and historic. And as always, there is the wonderful sense of piety that pulls it all together, emanating from a soul shaped by a child-like faith and nurtured by art's life-giving force.

For comments e-mail the author at gdormiendo @yahoo.com.



"PAOAY Church," acrylic on paper



"JESUS," mixed media

UST offers new programs in Cultural Heritage Studies

IN LINE with its commitment to pursue an educational role in cultural heritage and applied museology, the University of Santo Tomas Museum of Arts and Sciences will offer a Master in Cultural Heritage Studies and a Certificate Program in Cultural Heritage Studies at the UST Graduate School starting this academic year 2002-2003.

The two courses are the latest additions to UST's Cultural Heritage Studies Program, which started two years ago with the introduction of the Graduate Diploma in Cultural Heritage Studies. Altogether the three courses aim to address the manpower developmental needs of the increasing number of cultural workers in museum, archives, libraries, galleries and cultural sites in the Philippines. It is intended for those who are responsible for the care and protection of tangible, movable and immovable property, whether in a professional or private capacity, or in any role involving the care of works of art and heritage.

The courses provide students with theoretical and practical skills to enrich and nurture their understanding of the processes involved in the social production and transmission of heritage and values. The student's scholarly attitude toward research and promotion of collaboration is also developed.

Students taking up the Diploma course can upgrade the program to a Master' s degree by applying and fulfilling the requirements.

Course coordinator is Fr. Isidro C. Abano, director of the UST Museum and concurrent dean of the UST College of Fine Arts and Design. Course consultant is Prof. Eric B. Zerrudo, UST faculty member and GSIS director for cultural facilities.

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Lush enrichments for Nasugbu church renovation

TONY Adriano

NASUGBU is a sleepy sea side town on the southern part of the province of Batangas. Its main interest is basically agricultural.

The town cannot boast of anything except for its famed beaches, where thousands of water-hungry Manilans troop to during the summer to escape the heat in the metropolis. When one speaks of Nasugbu, only one thing comes to one's mind—its beaches.

Business is conducted mainly with the Central Azucarera de Don Pedrom. With the onset of development south of the town, subdivisions and resorts have been multiplying, making the once sleepy place a prospective boom town. The white beaches along the interlink and the recently opened Punta Fuego would soon rival the private enclaves of neighboring Tagaytay.

The Catholic Parish of Nasugbu is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its canonical erection as a parish.

It has St. Francis Xavier as patron, the Batangas area being then a Jesuit mission territory. (It must be noted that St. Francis Xavier is not a popular saint in the Philippines. He is more popular in China, Japan and Portuguese Macau, where he established himself. For his untiring efforts to Christianize Asia, Pius X declared him the Patron of the Missions.)

In the old style

The parish council has established a committee to oversee the construction and renovation of the church in time for the parish's 150th anniversary in December.

The parish priest, Rev. Msgr. Alberto M. Boongaling, has appointed the following as committee members: Charito M. Apacible, overall chair; Fely Morales, vice chair; Tom A. Mulingbayan, construction chair; Baby Lucas, finance chair; Susan Bacit, treasurer; Edna Maligaya, auditor; Dolly Soriano, secretary; Bro. Johnny Ilagan, purchasing officer/timekeeper; Bro. Ernie Perez, purchasing officer; Bro. Efren Bacit, warehouse/security; Belen Cordero, Dr. Apolonio Bitas, Dr. Mely W. Lim, Virginia Torroba and Celsa Villacrusis, solicitors.

They have envisioned a church interior in the "old style," meaning, one of such grandeur that it would be the envy of all parishes in the Nasugbu area, if not in the whole of the province.

As interior designer, they have chosen Antonio S. Adriano, PIID, scion of the famed furniture-maker in the Ermita district before the war. A Manila-based interior and furniture designer, he has a long list of clientele that reads like a veritable Who's Who, from politics to royalty, from the ecclesiastical to the taipans of business.

A papal awardee, Adriano especially cherishes his projects for the Archdiocese of Manila, particularly his designs for the Pope's visit in January 1991. He regards as his greatest achievement his design for the papal throne, seconded only by the throne used by the King of Malaysia in the 1980s.

Architectural details

Adriano's preliminary sketches for the Nasugbu church interior show semblance of some details to those in the Basilica of St. Peter's in Vatican. He believes it is not the bulk or vastness that gives the church its grandeur but the lush enrichments and color brilliance.

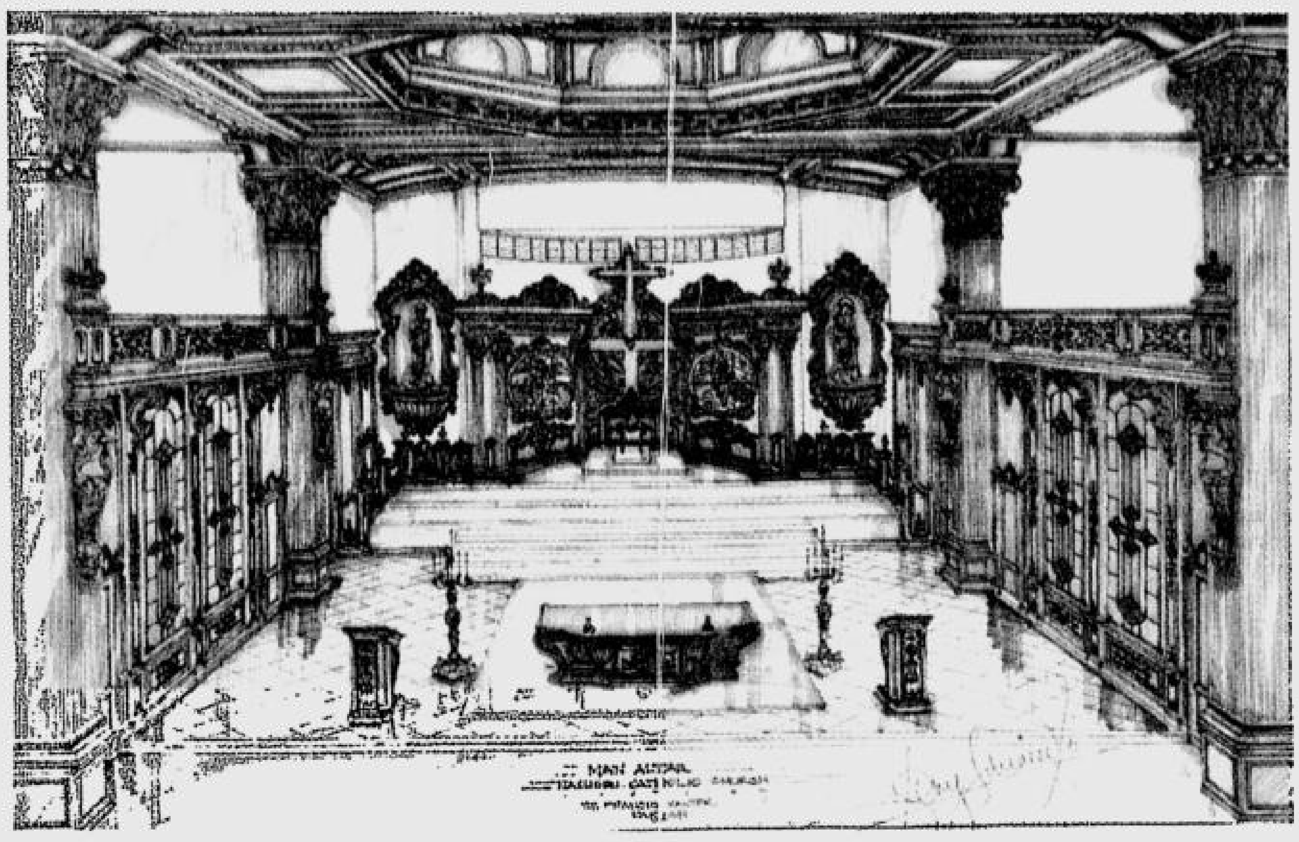
Curves instead of straight lines have been utilized for its structural elements, columns twisting into a spiral supporting nothing! Entablatures and moldings follow bulging shapes, bursting and warping into a tri-dimensional curve. Scrolls and serpentine pediments, angels and cherubs in seemingly impossible postures, add to the drama. Lights, both natural and artificial, will add to the detailing.

Pedestals, columns, pilasters and panels, employed for decoration and structural purposes, will be utilized to produce a hall of great formality, dignity and magnificence. Column capitals follow classical lines but with certain variations.

The basic architectural details will be done in hardwood. Gilding with 18-k gold leaf will give accents to the carved details.

The main altar will feature stained-glass windows depicting the four Evangelists surrounding an antique cross. On the front will be depictions of the first Filipino saint, Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila, on the gospel side, and the church's patron on the other.

The main altar is expected' to be completed and inaugurated in time for the celebrations in December.



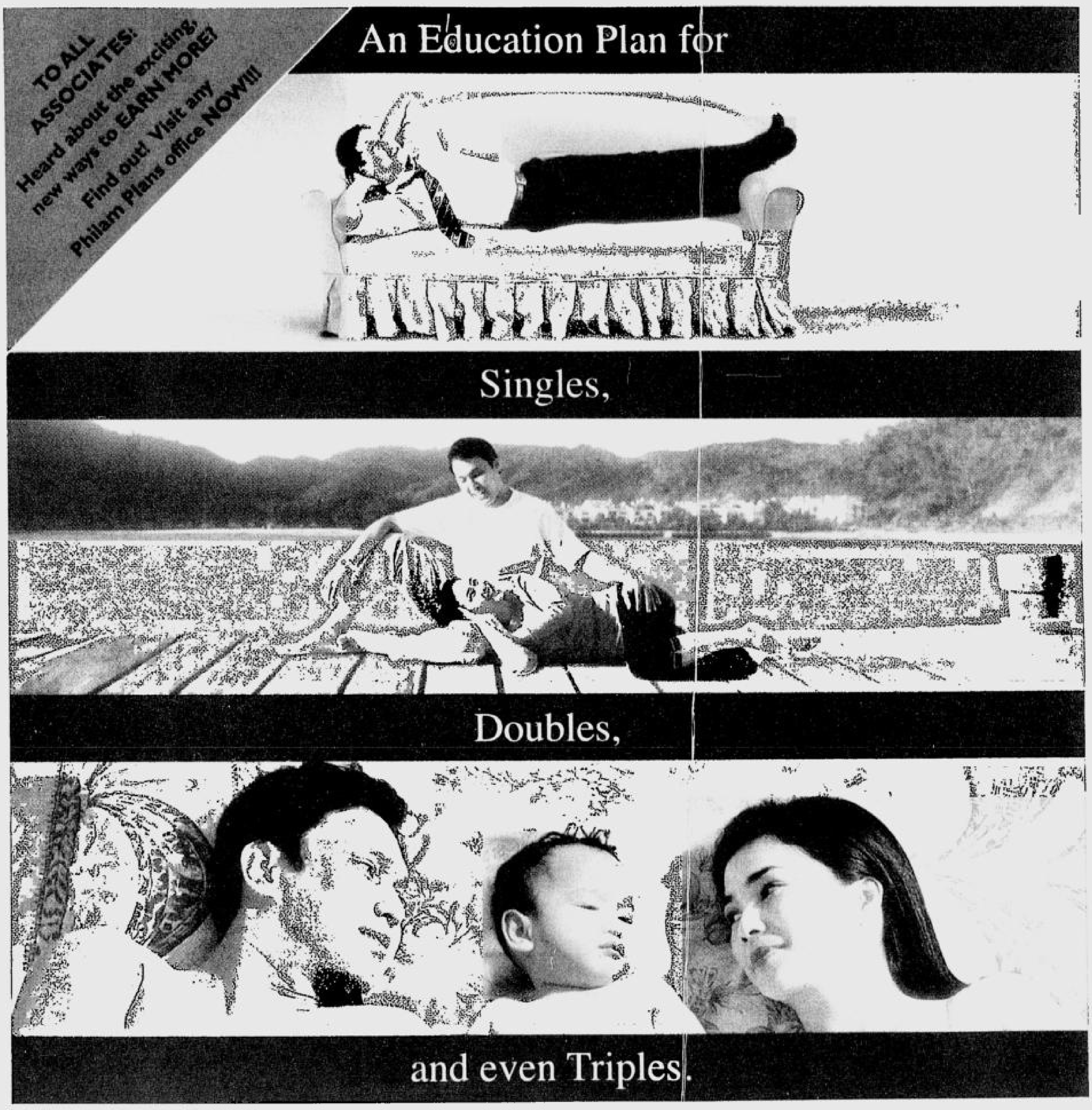
ARTIST'S preliminary sketch of the magnificent church interior

Lighting design workshop

"AWARENESS Of Light: Lighting Design Workshop," a hands-on training workshop on theater lighting, will be held on May 20-26, 9 a.m.-9 p.m., at the Sinag Arts Studio. Facilitating is Naomi "Shoko" Matsumoto, a Japanese lighting designer based in the Philippines. Her recent theater lighting credits include "Alikabok" at the Music Museum, "Little Mermaid" at the Meralco Theater and "Ang Pagpatay kay Luna" at the CCP.

The Sinag Arts Studio, located at 664 San Ignacio St., Mandaluyong City, is a venue for technical training for theater and is an alternative venue for performances. The workshop will culminate to a showcase on May 26 featuring Dulaang Talyer and Footworks Dance Theater.

E-mail Sinag Arts at sinag@fastmall.i-next.net, call 531-3491 or fax 531-9524.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one with the filipino family

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The collage as sonnet

By Constantino C. Tejero

WE often find collage a more personal statement from the artist than his or her regular medium such as oil or acrylic on canvas.

It is the stream of the artist's consciousness, each element in it a thought that collides and merges with another to form an intimate idea. In other words, it is Shakespeare's sonnets as compared to his dramas.

A popular hobby for children and amateur artists, collage was adopted and given a twist by the Cubists, the Futurists, the Dadaists and the Surrealists. As assemblage is to sculpture, collage would be to painting.

Maybe because of its random quality (parts or fragments of envelopes, photographs, book or magazine pages, newspaper clippings, bus or theater tickets, pasted on a single flat surface), or maybe because of the fragility of the medium (usually paper), collage hasn't gained the serious attention that other art forms enjoy. It is only recently that it has started to draw the interest of serious art collectors.

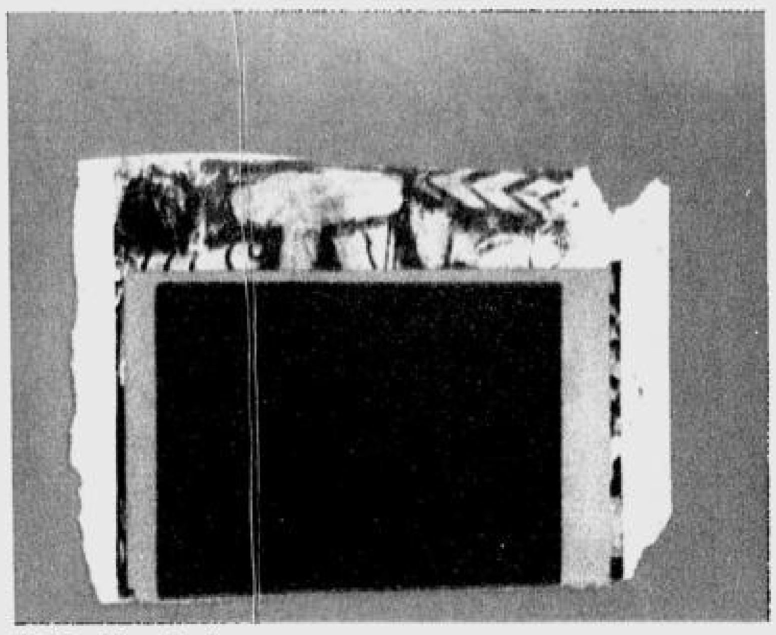
"Collages," an exhibit by Alfredo Juan Aquilizan ongoing until May 21 in West Gallery at Artlane, 3/F, Glorietta 4, Ayala Center, Makati City, offers nine pieces of such delicate beauty.

Trained in painting, interior design, printmaking, marble sculpture, installation art, Aquilizan took up fine arts at the Philippine Women's University and his master's degree at the Norwich School of Art and Design.

His latest exhibit is mostly abstract, with one or two pieces hinting at the figurative idiom. They look like images of ruin, fragments of a mind, the bits and pieces of a life.

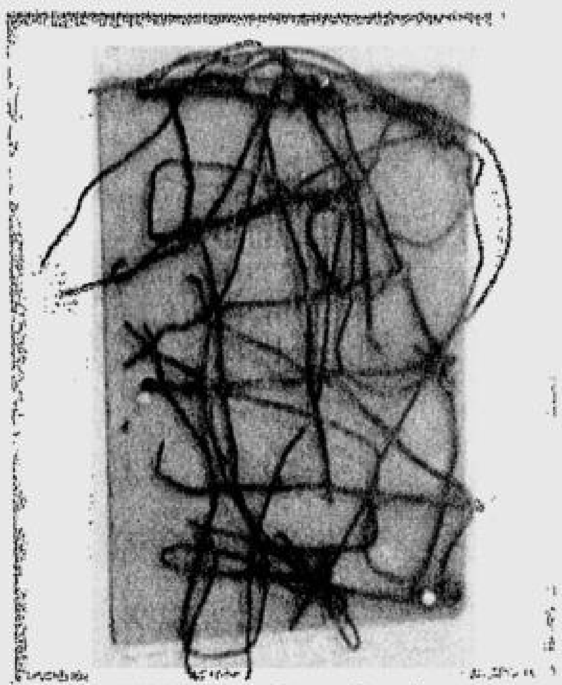
Marginal inscription

Framed with an expander of light-colored wood and beige canvas, each piece has a *cartolina* backing glued with rectangles of paper and metal of varying colors, shades and textures, placed side by side or overlapping, with a few painted passages. The pieces play on the contrast of textures of metal and various types of paper.


"IT'S a Vocation"

Also, as if to drive our point above more emphatically, the artworks have been inscribed on the margins with quotes from poetry in swift stroke of pencil. Their titles, in fact, have been derived from these poetic lines.

"It's Just One of Those Things" is composed of red *cartolina* pasted with rectangles of parchment and stripped *lawanit*. The inscription reads: "It's one of those things that we always do. We immerse ourselves in each other's concerns and affairs."


"THOUGHT Always Running away. . ."

"Through an Opening" has an ochre surface glued with a rectangle of gray *lawanit* and a series of four rectangles on cardboard tinted brown and ochre. And this line: "The doorbell rang and a letter slipped through an opening."

"To Get Oneself a House of Glass" has a black *cartolina* glued with rectangles of glossy black metal sheet, rusty punctured metal sheet and blue-green *cartolina*. And this: 'There was a time when I dreamed that we should be starting to get ourselves a house of glass."

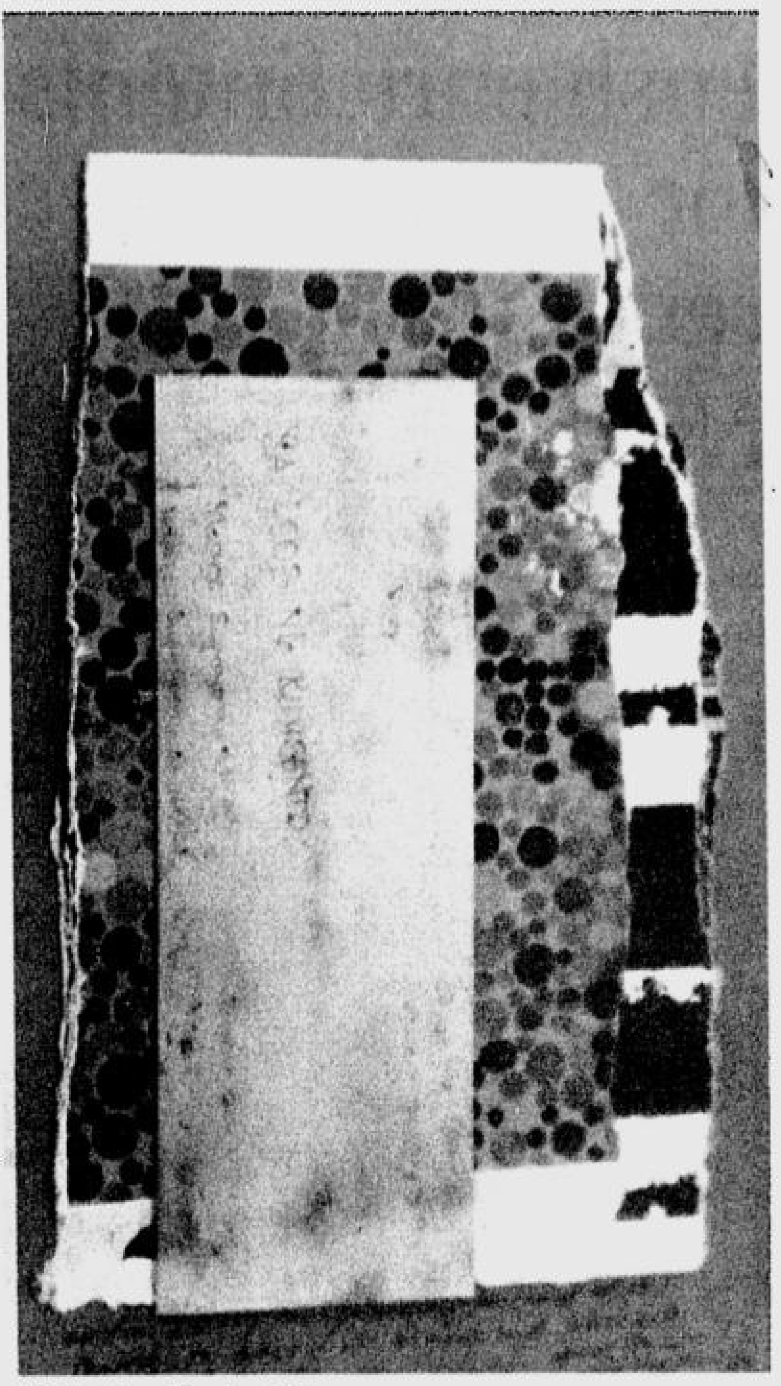
"Gently, Gently..." has a fuchsia surface glued with a torn magazine photograph of the cosmos in blue, rectangles of stripped paper and beige linen paper, and a soiled spare part of mechanism. And this: "She stared at the blank horizon, unmoving. Gently, gently..."

"It's a Vocation" has a red surface with a fragment of a glossy magazine page and rectangles of tobacco-brown paper and indigo *cartolina*. And this: "You and I always thought that it's a vocation."

"Fiction" has a beige surface with three overlapping rectangles of brown parchment and cream-colored linen paper. This is the only piece without an inscription.

Free association

"Sa Loob ng Kumbento," the most mysterious of the lot, is composed of an old rose *cartolina* with four overlapping pieces of stripped paper of various prints (brown polka dots, black and white stripes), and a rectangle of folded bond paper with faded handwriting in ballpoint pen. The inscription reads: "Extend the front phalanx of the thumb...to where it begins and to where it will end...so as the voyage goes to..."


"SA Loob ng Kumbento"

"The Night at the Bottom of the Drive" has a brown surface pasted with black and white stripped paper, and a rectangle of cream linen paper cut in half by a horizontal orange line. And this: "The night at the bottom of the drive is bleak, though the bougainvillea streaming across my window hopeful of the evening..."

"Thought Always Running away," with a reddish-brown surface, has a rectangle of thick brown cardboard with a tangle of rusty wire fastened to it with three nails. And this: "You and your fatal thought always running away, my chase growing lighter by day..."

Though we can detect some free association, we assume the artist himself didn't know what to expect while composing these pieces. He says that every time he works it's like conversing with the space around him, "like entering a dark room and having to guess what's inside."

We wouldn't know the correlation of those lines to the arrangements of shapes and colors on the surface. We can only speculate that the artist must be speaking from the deepest recesses of his memory. Over-interpretation will only ruffle the surface, disturb his peace.

VISUAL ARTS

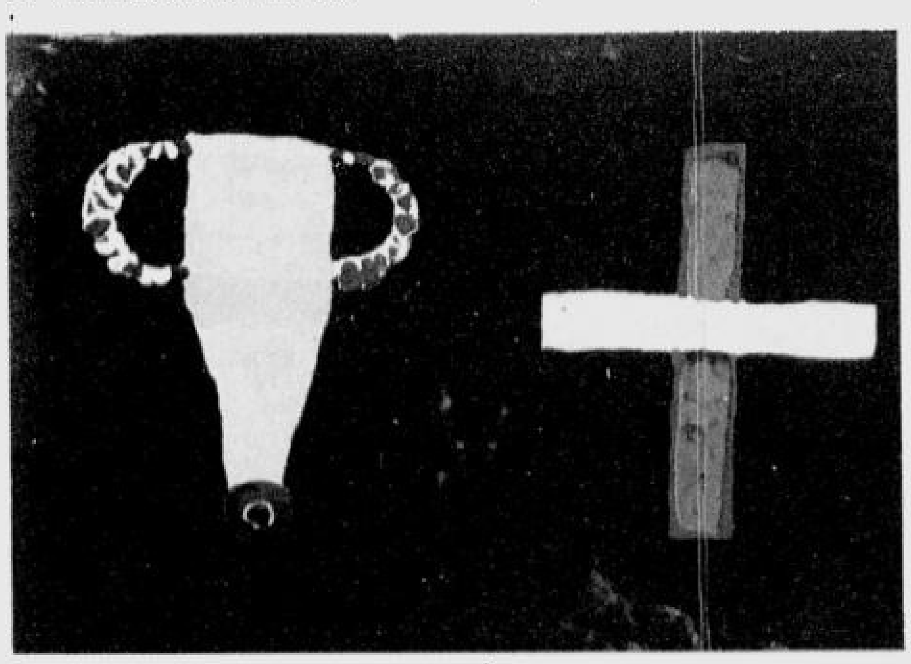
Alcazaren at West, Tam-awan artists at Hiraya, Severino at Pintô, Mendez at Artwalk

JUAN Alcazaren's "space tour" continues with "Withdrawing Methods" that uses as painting subjects the same found objects from his recent installation show. The exhibit is on view at the West Gallery, 3/L, Glorietta 4, Ayala Center, Makati City, May 23-June 4. Alcazaren recycles found objects, installing them in a visual collage. He arranges them in a manner that they look like parts of a whole. Call 752-7028 to 29.

GROUP EXHIBIT AT HIRAYA GALLERY. "Cordillera," an exhibit by the Baguio City-based Tam-awan Artists—Ged Alangui, Roland Bay-an, Jojo Elmeda, Jordan Mang-osan and John Frank Sabado—runs until May 30. Hiraya Gallery is at 530 United Nations Ave., Ermita, Manila. Call 523-3331.

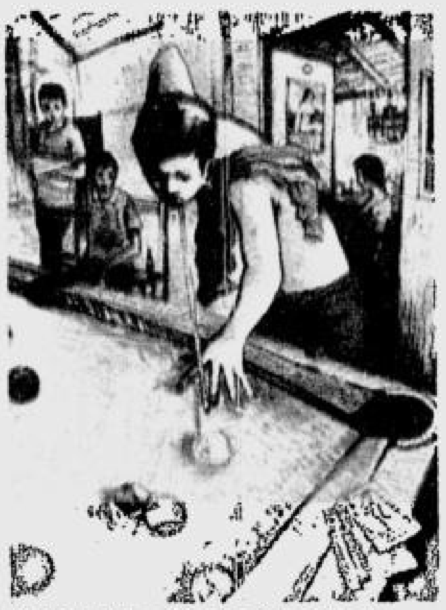
SEVERINO RETROSPECTIVE. After 30 years of working, Lino Severino, a pilot-turned-painter, will exhibit a selection of his works in "Severino Retrospective: 1972-2002" at the Pintô Art Gallery, June 16-July 14. The exhibit will include the recent "Vanishing Scenes," to be shown at the Gallery I and at the House. Pintô's Gallery II will display the artist's "Vanishing Variations" series, while his watercolors will be shown at the annex, Bahay Silangan Gallery. Call 697-1015. Pintô Art Gallery, 1 Sierra Madre St., Grand Heights, Antipolo City.

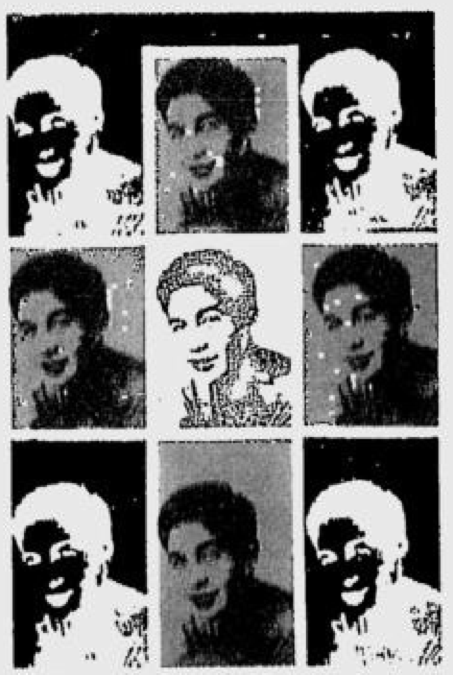
MENDEZ AT SM MEGAMALL. Joel Mendez fuses celebrity and artistry in "Famous Faces," his biggest one-man show so far at the SM Megamall Art Center. On view May 26-June 9 are acrylic works featuring some of the Philippines' most recognizable faces, including former First Lady Imelda Marcos and movie and television personalities. The show is presented by The Big & Small Art Co. and Weigh Less Center and Spa. Call 687-7425. Also ongoing is Mendez's "Circular Motion" at the West Gallery, ArtWalk, Level 4, SM Megamall A, Mandaluyong City. Call 634-1284.


"TOURIST Trap," enamel on canvas, by Juan Alcazaren, at West

AGNER AT DRAWING ROOM. Raul Agner holds his first one-man show of pen and ink drawings at The Drawing Room, G/F, Metrostar Building, 1007 Metropolitan Ave., Makati City, May 18-June 5. The drawings show ordinary people in the community (Leyte) where the artist lives. They focus on the people's continuing pursuit of a better life, the forces that control them, the issues that affect them, their best and worst qualities. Call 897-6990/7877.

CAINGLET AT BIG & SMALL ART CO. Henri C. Cainglet renews his commitment to art and nature in his latest one-man show, "A Cry in the Wild," at the Big & Small Art Co., 4/L, Building A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, until May 31. Cainglet has always rallied behind the endangered beauty of nature, capturing its essence either on canvas or through sculpture. Call 687-7425.


"LAST Bol sa Nuebe," by Elmer Roslin, at Boston


"REMEMBERING an Icon," mixed media, by Joel Mendez, at Artwalk-Megamall

NUYDA AT GALLERIA DUEMILA. Galleria Duemila (210 Loring St., Pasay City, or at the Artwalk, SM Megamall) showcases the latest works of Justin Nuyda, featuring several paintings from 1980 to 2000. The exhibit, which runs until May 30, is a testament to Nuyda's consistency in creating sensual and surreal explorations of form. Call 634-3261, 831-9990, 633-6687, or 833-9815.

ROSLIN AT BOSTON GALLERY. Elmer Roslin presents his first solo show, "Taumbayan," which opens June 1, at Boston Gallery. Roslin graduated from the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts, where he majored in Visual Communications. He has participated in several group exhibitions since 1996. Call 722-9205.

CORDES AT GALLERY FIVE. Australian artist Bea Cordes holds her 11th solo exhibit, "Davao Canvasses," at Gallery Five, 5/L, JS Gaisano Citimall, V. Ilustre St., Davao City, until June 18. Her works are figurative and possess a colorful combination of hues. Her latest works were conceptualized in Uganda and in the Philippines. The exhibit presents a series of works featuring the Davao Waterfront and Davao street life.

ATIENZA AT WEST GALLERY. "Lemma," an exhibit of paintings and photographs by Billy Atienza, is on view at West Gallery (Artwalk, 4/L, SM Megamall) until May 28. Curated by Roberto Chabet, "Lemma" is Atienza's first one-man exhibit.

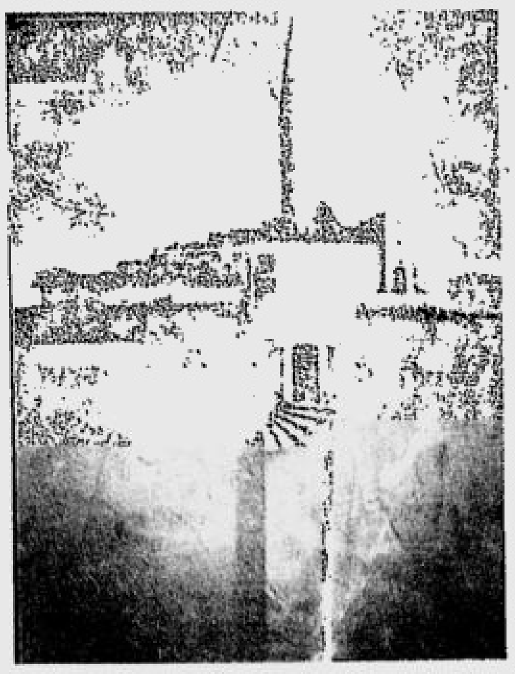
TWO-MAN SHOW AT MAC GALLERY. The Madrigal Art Center in Ayala Alabang presents sisters Cianang Mendoza and Badang Guinto in a two-woman show dubbed "Sister's Pact" at the MAC Gallery, Commerce Avenue, Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa City, until May 31. The exhibit showcases a collection of still life and landscapes from the sisters' excursions to out-of-the way places like Makiling. Call 842-0127.

FESTIVAL ART. "Festival and Customs Exhibit" features artworks from different regions of the country, to promote domestic tourism. Participating artists include Mac Oliver Pedral, Jaacan Castelon, Philipp Kulikov, Eric Emperador, Bayani Milana, Ruben Pedral, Ericson Pedral, Juanito Martinez Jr., Eddie Torio, Victor Dator, Steven Layman, Lynnette Mamaclay, Mely Banaag, Elena Bragais, Lea Vizcara, Lynne Caalim, Bessie Udal, Glenda Uy, Ethel Bastero, Maria Josephine Narvasa, Teresita Elepanio, Arnel Azarcon, Nick Noveloso, Jean Morquesta Jr., Cesar Catacutan Jr., Oliver Pedral, and Manny Mitra. Part of the collection will be exhibited in Iloilo and Davao, where the artists will conduct workshops and local competitions to discover and promote talents. The exhibit will also be shown on June 12, Independence Day, in the Philippine Consulates General in Los Angeles, Chicago, Toronto and in the Philippine embassies in Paris, London and Madrid.

CABRERA IN BALI. Ben Cabrera holds an exhibit of drawings at Valentine Willie Fine Art at The Chedi, in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia. Dubbed "Bencab in Ubud: Works on Paper," the show is a product of Bencab's month-long artist-in-residency program with Valentine Willie, Malaysian dealer of Southeast Asian art, who was recently appointed exhibitions director of the Esplanade in Singapore. Part of a month-long festival of Filipino art in Bali, "Ubud ng Ganda" also includes a show of photographs by Neal Oshima and jewelry by Celia Molano at The Legian. The exhibit runs until June 9.

ECOLOGICAL ART. In collaboration with Astoria Plaza, ABS-CBN Bantay Kalikasan and Filipino Arts Online presented an exhibit of 30 Filipino artists on ecology dubbed "An Expression of Mutual Dependence." The exhibit highlighted the importance of preserving the environment through different artworks. Featured artists: Nick Aranda, Vic Bachoco, Philip Badon, Mads Bago, Manuel Baldemor, Inday Cadapan, Allen Casacop, Rafael Cusi, Antonio Kho, Thelma Llorico, Oying Madrilejos, Benjo Manigo, Eric Mercado, Noli Nim, Ramil Palma, Manuel Rodriguez Jr., Waldz Villanueva, Ernesto Villanueva and William Yu.

ALCAZAREN/ p.D5


"CLOUD Factory"

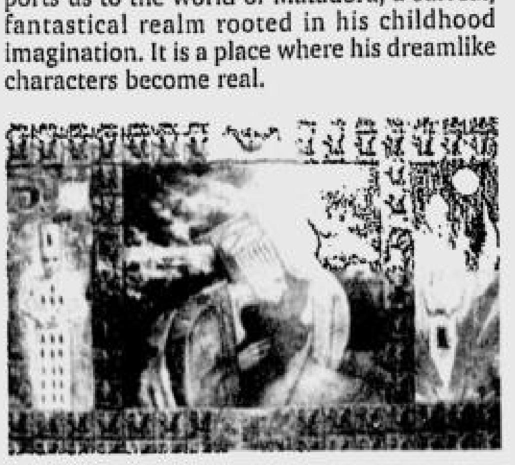
Villaseran at Ad Infinitum

"MATADORA," the first solo exhibit of mixed-media artist Rom Villaseran, will open at Ad Infinitum Galleries, 190 F. Blumentritt St. San Juan, Metro Manila on May 24, 7 p.m. The show will run until June 7. Call 726-9015/ 724-3032, or e-mail the gallery at xtn_b@ edsamail.com.ph, or the artist at romvillaseran@hotmail. com.ph.

Villaseran in known for his work on the album covers of popular bands on the local music scene such as Cheese ("Cheese" 1999, "Pilipinas" 2002), Wolfgang ("Volume, USA Tour" 2002), Greyhoundz ("Greyhoundz" 2001) and Slapshock ("4th Degree Burn" 1999; "Headtrip" 2000) as well as compilation albums for NU 107 and N5A Productions. As a freelance graphic designer, he has worked for Sony Music Philippines, MP3 Manila, Octo Arts, Virgin Records Philippines, Warner Records Philippines and NU 107 dwFM, among others.

With a children's e-book to his name ("Little Big Things" published under the Nerdy Carabao.com 2001), he is now working on the illustrations of his first graphic novel due in late 2002.

A veteran graphic artist, Villaseran transports us to the world of Matadora, a surreal, fantastical realm rooted in his childhood imagination. It is a place where his dreamlike characters become real.


"TWO Moons"

REMEMBERING LORNA REVILLA MONTILLA

Godspeed, Bohemian Mama

By Sylvia L. Mayuga
Contributor

SHE'S gone now, my Lorna, the bohemian older sister who liked to call herself my mother. Fiction—how could she have had me pre-puberty? But poetic license well taken.

For if Nonoy Marcelo taught me the perils of genius, Ishmael Bernal the power of irony, Krip Yuson how labyrinths make literature, Gilda Cordero-Fernando a wild generosity, Junie Kalaw the width and breadth of things, Lorna Revilla Montilla gave me my first peek into the underside of the Filipino soul.

She was of a breed born resistant to craven city ways, if not always strong and cunning enough to defeat them. "The Tagalog," she would roar, "is nothing but a sly little opportunist, the prototype lowland dweller. He will sell his soul for a car, a piece of real estate and a house, spreading a gray flat ethos all over the country. He has no identity, no pride, no mythology to speak of," concluding with a sniff, "and what's more, he has no living epic."

The protesting '60s and '70s was our special time together, joining her generation and mine by inner compass. Together we puzzled, figured out, rejoiced in finding ourselves sufficiently out of the mainstream to be free of its compulsions, sufficiently in it to survive, laughing at the odd fit.

LORNA with Lucy Consunji

But what and where was the right fit? Inday Lorna, grassroots Visayan, wearing red stockings and her huge heart on her sleeve, set me on a long, winding trail to discover for myself. Long before the UN declared a Decade of Indigenous Peoples, I sat fascinated for hours as she produced a skull, a mask, a bell, a piece of tribal weave, all manner of pottery, beads, moonstones, tribal recipes, bawdy wedding songs. An anthropology student at the FEU, her narration of this digging and that, mixed scholarly theory with leaps of folk imagination and episodes of her own off-the-wall life story. (She was married but believed in free love, took the beatings and betrayals of Eros with forgiving laughter, and, to the end of her days, never stopped believing in fated love.)

Always dialogic, never platonic, whole days passed, with breaks for fine Ilonggo cuisine on mother-of-pearl plates, as she took me leaping from forest to sea to mountains and caves, in lore and adventure piquant with morsels of gossip on the secret lives of anthropologists and hints of salvation in the tribal way. Her trail had already covered an awesome lot of ground by the time we met.

There she had made the personal acquaintance of the spirits of rice, corn, aged honey, sugarcane and coconut wherever there was a festival. She had done a war dance in Pakil's *turrumba*, nearly fallen off a church belfry in Pulilan, gone hungry in a Mangyan festival, been stranded with Marinduque's Moriones, fainted in a Sariaya Pahiyas, been downed by LBM from spoiled *pancit* in a Malabon *santacruzan*, reeled from too much *tapuy* with the Tingguian, suffered insomnia in a powwow of the Marawi sultanate, been doing the *ati-atihan* in Kalibo for years.

But what intrigued me most was her search for Datu Sumakwel, *primus inter pares* of the 10 Bruneian *datus* who fled the Madjapahit tyrant Makatunaw in the early 13th century. By the '70s, she was looking for his burial place in a range of hills in Panay, a female Heinrich Schliemann with the shaman Mal-am Sebio as her Homer.

LORNA Revilla Montilla

Lost father

Long before she found him, she'd already gathered a bolt-long series of tales on, she solemnly informed me, "the long-lost father of Panay and our race." To begin, Sumakwel was the progenitor of the island's agriculture, having brought domesticated rice seeds, planted bamboo and *banyan* all over the hillsides, introduced the uses of wild *buri*. Also keeper of the crafts, he had designed long wooden houses, taught bead stringing, weaving and dyeing of *sinamay*. (Lorna insisted it was tie-dyeing, kin to Indonesian batik.) More, he was both lawgiver and historian who taught his people to record their laws, songs and stories on bamboo and dried deerskin with squid ink in iron-quill pens.

By far the most fascinating of the Great Father's lore was his "right hand man"—a Hindu priest called Padi Bangutbangwa, adept in the magical arts. He could, she said, locate water in parched ground, assume invisibility and fly—"*pangalap* in Bisaya," she made sure to tell me. In fact, *bangutbangwa* (*balian*, *baylan*, *babaylan* in related tongues) is generic for sorcerer in Panay. Of the 600 *bangut-bangwas* on the island, fate chose Mal-am Sebio to sing her "The Song of Sumakwel."

Details are hazy with time but yellowed files yield a verse account of Inday Lorna's transcription, 40-odd years ago, of his "trance-chanting, possessed by the spirit of a dying Sumakwel": "I have to reach the clouds straight to the realm of Burululakaw from whom we all come like fertile seeds... See that the throne of gold and the bed of gold and the mat of gold where I lounged and played are sunk into quagmire made from a bamboo pole of ashes, ashes so thick they will never dry. Lower them to water level, sink them with the ashes, mix them with water. The ashes from my bones, from the fragrance of my flesh, place in a golden vessel, carry gently to my grave, into the quagmire of a bamboo pole of ashes, lay it gently with the gold, gold that honored my birth, gold of sweetness, gold of the kingdoms, gold of the race."

No aversion

Inday Lorna had no aversion to gold. With yet another ream of tales on the buried treasures of Limahong, Yamashita and Lakan Davao, she hopped through the years from Baguio caves to Kanlaon foothills to the Cotabato plains with a treasure map extracted from a Japanese prisoner of war. But finally sure that she had found Sumakwel's burial hill, she turned around and said, "It's not the gold that keeps me going back. I have this strange feeling I'm really the reincarnation of his wife, Kapinangan."

> She was convinced she was Kapinangan, the reincarnated wife of Sumakwel, one of the legendary 10 Bornean datus

Well, in a universe with miracles of faith on one hand, on the other relativity, quantum mechanics and the new chaos theory blowing our minds, who really knows? At ease with both fact and fiction, Inday Lorna never did dig for that gold despite yearly sojourns to breathe the purer air of her native Antique to relieve congenital asthma. But she did buckle down to write a manuscript, already filling a box in the late '80s, as she supported herself, her growing brood and a continuing line of spirit-seekers and bohemians-in-need by dealing in paintings and tribal artifacts.

Things happening in both our lives kept us apart for over a decade since then. I saw her all too briefly last February, wearing more ancient beads strung into new jewelry that could no longer disguise the price of time. Now her sudden passing leaves me stunned before a treasure trove of memories—and fresh proof that all this is really only an endless cycle. One of the treasures she left me is a pre-Spanish Bisayan calendar that says May, the month of her passing, is for "the contact of iron and stone to make fire for burning the fields in preparation for cleaning and sowing."

We have known that fire well, Inday Lorna and I, in ancient Bohemian warmth recycled into the Way of the Beatnik when we met. ("Did you know that the root word of 'Beatnik' is 'Beatitudes,' you know, the Sermon on the Mount?" she asked me then.) The raucous laughter that followed echoes down the decades, to its later version called hippie and its cousin called postmodern. So I must ask: where is her thick manuscript on Sumakwel? What more could it teach us about ourselves and how, even as we mourn, time is folding into itself, past, present and future in a seamless continuum called "now"?

Finally in Burululakaw with the brightest star of her ever-youthful sky, Inday Lorna, likely still laughing fit to be tied, could just tell us one of these days.

Amorsolos and Manansalas post record bids at Christie's auction

HONG KONG—The historical inaugural auctions of Southeast Asian and 20th-century Indian Pictures and 20th-century Chinese Art at Christie's Hong Kong Spring auctions on April 28 achieved astonishing results, with both sales realizing the highest ever totals in their categories. World auction records for seven artists were realized and the highest price ever paid for a painting by a Taiwanese artist was also established. These two categories were previously held in Singapore and Taipei and were included in the sales series for the first time in Hong Kong this spring.

The Southeast Asian and 20th-century Indian Pictures sale totaled HK$32,323,955, the highest recorded total for any Southeast Asian pictures sale and was 100 percent sold. The top lot of the sale was "The Lion Hunt," by Indonesian artist Raden Saleh (1807-1880), which sold for $4,364,100 to a private Indonesian buyer on the telephone after spirited bidding in the sale room. As the first known native of the Dutch East Indies who painted in the Western style, Saleh is often considered a pioneer of Indonesian painting.

World auction records for artists were achieved by "Portrait of Fernanda de Jesus," by Filipino artist Fernando Cueto Amorsolo (1892-1972), which sold for $2,934,100. "Crucifixion," by Vicente Silva Manansala (1910-1981) sold for $1,119,100.

"Market Scene," by Indonesian artist Hendra Gunawan (1918-1983) sold for $2,494,100, more than three times the pre-sale estimate, also establishing a world auction record for the artist.

Ruoh-Ling Keong, Christie's specialist of Southeast Asian Paintings, said: "In a packed sale room, works of high quality and excellent provenance attracted fierce bidding throughout the sale, pushing the prices for many lots far beyond their high estimates. We enjoy the support of our traditional Indonesian clientele while benefiting from an even more international atmosphere."

In the 20th-century Indian Pictures section, two world auction records for artists were achieved: "Lady" by Akbar Paadamsee (born 1928) realized $101,575 and "Vishal" by Atul Dodiya (born 1959) sold for $89,625. Mallika Sagar, Christie's specialist for 20th-century Indian Art, commented: "The Indian section of the sale attracted great interest from international buyers. We were particularly pleased with the strong prices achieved by Atul Dodiya, one of the youngest and promising artists in the sale. Senior artists Vasudeo S. Gaitonde and Maqbool Fida Husain (born 1915) continued to demonstrate strong prices."

The 20th-century Chinese Art sale also achieved an impressive total of $23,168,965, the highest recorded total for any sale on 20th-century Chinese art, and was 97.28 percent sold by value. "Chia-Yi Park" by Chen Chenbo (1895-1947) sold for $5,794,100, more than double its high estimate. It established a new auction record for the artist and also became the highest price ever paid for a painting by a Taiwanese artist. This painting presents a scene from Chen's hometown through intense, enthusiastic brushwork and color application, and shows how he expressed through painting his love for his country. Another highlight was "Old Broadway in Winter," by Zhu Yuanzhi (1906-1963), which realized $2,934,100, setting a world auction record for the artist.

Commenting on the sale, Eric Chang, specialist of 20th-century Chinese Art at Christie's, said: "We are very pleased with the fantastic results achieved in our record-breaking sale, which attracted collectors from around the world. It was very encouraging to see that apart from the established Taiwanese buyers, there was a strong international participation with about two-thirds of the lots selling to buyers from America, Europe, Japan, Hong Kong and Southeast Asian countries. This reflects that there is a tremendous growing interest in 20th-century Chinese art among international collectors."

Levi's
What is your
RED
TAB?
flare

Alcazaren at West, Tam-awan . . .

From page D4

MINIATURE TREES. The Bonifacio Art Foundation Inc. presents "Bansoy sa Boni," exhibitions and workshops of miniaturized trees, at the Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, Metro Manila, on May 25. Bansoy, a contraction of the phrase *bansot na halamang makahoy,* is the art of miniaturizing trees in the Philippine context.

AT INTERCON. Hotel Inter-Continental presents "Gemini," an exhibit that seeks to explore the integration of duality through form, color and texture. It opens tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. at the lobby Art Café. Call 815-9711 local 231 or 233.

ART RESTORATION. The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) Visual Arts Unit is inviting painters, collectors and enthusiasts to a lecture on art restoration, 2-4 p.m., May 30, at the Bulwagang Pambansang Alagad ng Sining, 4/L, CCP Main Building, as a culminating activity of the ongoing Maningning Miclat exhibit. Painter and restorer Lazaro Soriano will discuss the basic technologies used for pre-emptive and conservative art restoration. Call 832-3702.

PHOTO CONTEST. The Asia-Pacific Cultural Center for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is inviting photographers and enthusiasts to participate in the 2002 ACCU Photo Contest. Theme of this year's contest is "The Joy of Sport." The contest is open to all citizens of Unesco member countries. Entries should be monochrome or color prints taken in the participant's own country. Each contestant is limited to three pieces. Entries should be accompanied with the prescribed entry form. Selection of winners will be held in September in Tokyo, Japan. Winning works will be included in traveling photo exhibits, which will tour countries in Asia. Deadline for submission of entries is July 31. Contest rules and entry forms are available at the CCP Visual Arts Unit, 4/L, CCP Main Building. Call 832-3702.

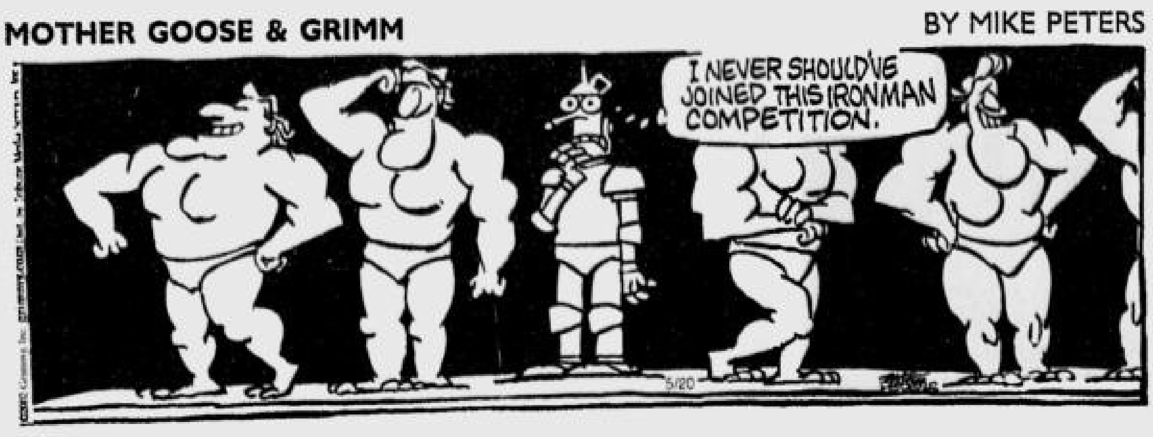
WORKSHOP EXHIBIT. Faber-Castell mounts the first exhibit of the top three artworks of elementary students from various schools who participated in its free school tour workshops. Dubbed "Art through a Child's Eyes," the works will be shown at the edge of the UP-Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. The exhibit opens today and will run until May 31. Call 361-7391 to 92.

WORKSHOP. The Alcove presents "Photo 301: A Primer on Studio Lighting Batch 2" by Jay Alonzo, May 31-June 1, at the Filipinas Heritage Library's Reading Room. The two-day workshop tackles lighting, especially with artificial light sources, the supreme creative tool of photography. It aims to help make the principles of light and illumination in photographing people, still life and products, easier to learn. Call 892-1802 or email events@fillib.org.

WORKSHOP. Escuela sa Museo's first Beginner's Ikebana Workshop will be held May 29. Learning Ikebana will give students the basic skills in flower arrangement Japanese-style, using tree branches aside from flowers to make arrangements look much more natural. Ikebana at Ayala Museum will run May 29-June 26, at the G/F, Old Makati Stock Exchange Building. Call 810-8407.

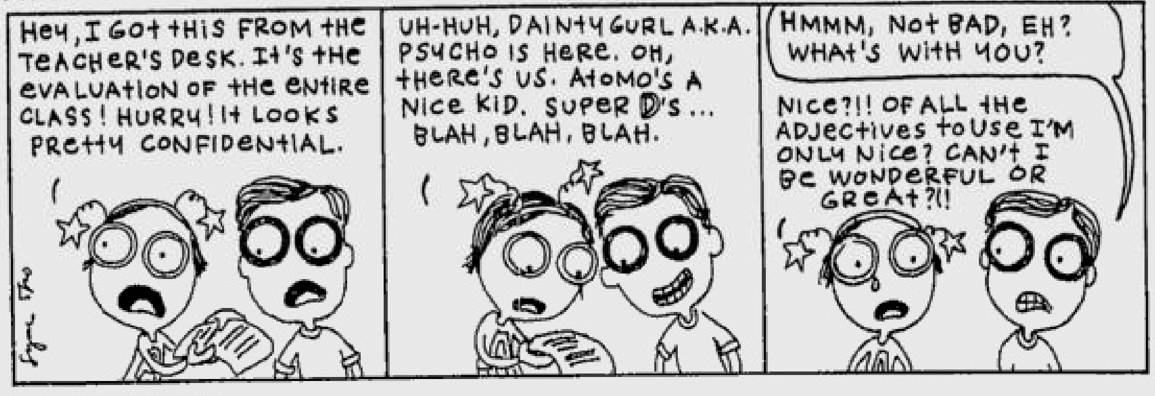
MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS


I NEVER SHOULD'VE JOINED THIS IRONMAN COMPETITION.
5/20

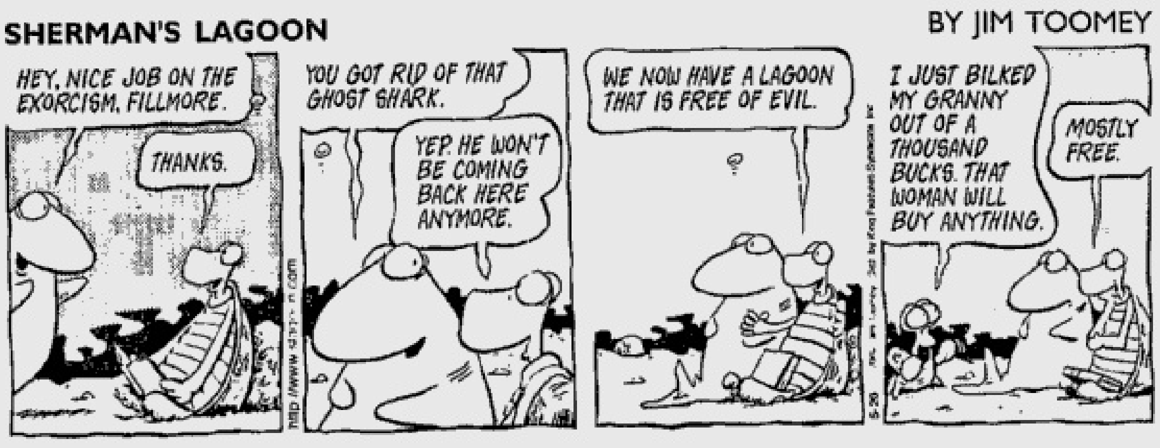
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, I Got this FROM the TeacHer's Desk. It's the evaluation of the entire class! Hurry! It looks pretty confidential.
UH-HUH, DAINTY GURL A.K.A. PSYCHO IS HERE. OH, THERE'S US. ATOMO'S A NICE KID. SUPER D'S... BLAH, BLAH, BLAH.
HMMM, NOT BAD, EH? WHAT'S WITH YOU?
NICE?!! OF ALL THE ADJECTIVES TO USE I'M ONLY NICE? CAN'T I BE WONDERFUL OR GREAT?!!

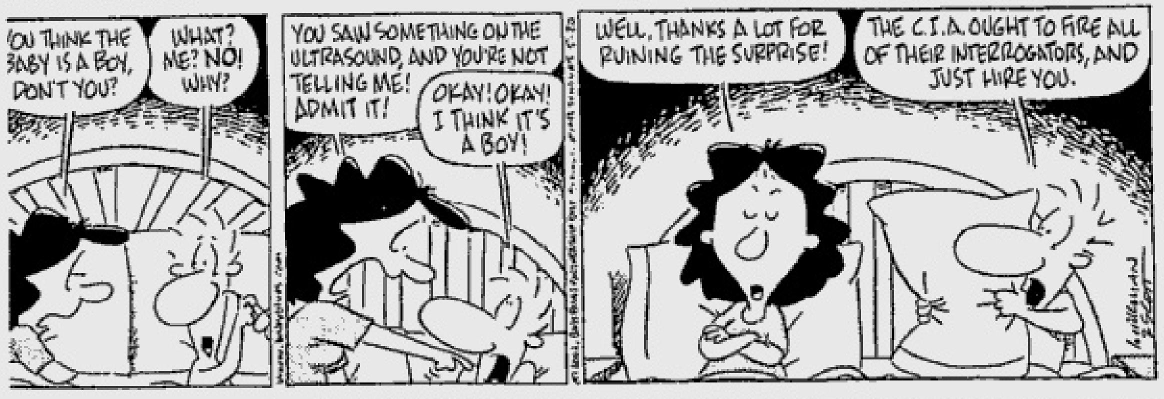
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


HEY, NICE JOB ON THE EXORCISM, FILLMORE.
THANKS.
YOU GOT RID OF THAT GHOST SHARK.
YEP. HE WON'T BE COMING BACK HERE ANYMORE.
WE NOW HAVE A LAGOON THAT IS FREE OF EVIL.
I JUST BILKED MY GRANNY OUT OF A THOUSAND BUCKS. THAT WOMAN WILL BUY ANYTHING.
MOSTLY FREE.

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


YOU THINK THE BABY IS A BOY, DON'T YOU?
WHAT? ME? NO! WHY?
YOU SAW SOMETHING ON THE ULTRASOUND, AND YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME! ADMIT IT!
OKAY! OKAY! I THINK IT'S A BOY!
WELL, THANKS A LOT FOR RUINING THE SURPRISE!
THE C.I.A. OUGHT TO FIRE ALL OF THEIR INTERROGATORS, AND JUST HIRE YOU.

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Bronson Pinchot, Jimmy Stewart, Danny Aiello, Cher

Happy Birthday: You will be intuitive when it comes to your friends and lovers. You will know how to inspire those around you. You will have unique connections to a co-worker and will find ways to implement your creative talents into your job. Your contributions will be appreciated and will result in advancement. Your numbers are 3, 10, 19, 23, 41, 45

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Take care of your health. It's better to be preventive than to allow yourself to become ill. Gauge the level of stress you are putting yourself through and make adjustments.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You should be looking into new hobbies that will expand your creative abilities and help you take your mind off your worries. Don't lend money to a friend today.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Focus on what needs to be done to your home to make it more pleasing. Someone you least expect may oppose your ideas. Stand up for yourself.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Communication will be a valuable tool today. Someone you least expect may try to undermine what you are trying to do. Be on guard and ready to prove your point.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Think twice before you lend or borrow. Investment groups may not be right for you. Joint ventures are not likely to pan out. Be careful what you do and where you put your belongings.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You'll be sensitive today so you must think before you speak. Be an attentive and affectionate listener if you want to keep the peace. If that isn't possible, focus on your work.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Put some thought into how you can make extra cash. You may find a good investment that not many people know about. If you jump in during the early stages you should do quite well.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): The more you can do for the underdog today the better. You will receive recognition for your good work and because of your honorable way of doing things.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Someone you least expect may cause problems for you today. Partnerships can go either way. You must watch closely; it may be time for you to make your move.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You need a change of scenery. Your mind will be in overdrive so if you take off on an adventure you will pick up valuable information. Mixing business with pleasure will be your ideal scenario.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You may want to refrain from being too social today. You are likely to get caught up in something that will lead to losses, not gains. Focus on what you do best and use your discipline to stick to your original plans.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): You will be sensitive to other people's needs. The more you delve into philosophic endeavors the more content and knowledgeable you will become. New friendships will develop through the company you keep.

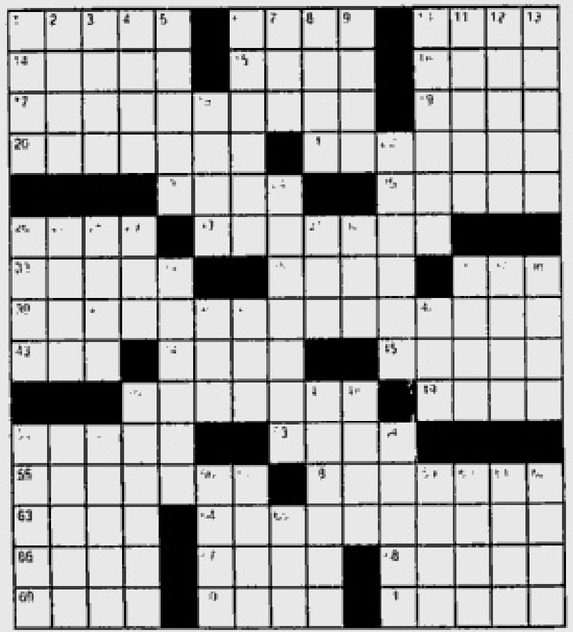
Birthday Baby: You will want everything to be perfect. You will express yourself in a detailed manner and rarely leave anything to chance. You will be well organized and terrific at formulating ideas and putting them into motion.

DAILY CROSSWORD

IMSPuzzles@aol.com

ACROSS
1 "My Dinner with Andre" director
6 Cheese byproduct
10 Desire
14 Homeric epic
15 Continental money
16 Borodin's "Prince _ "
17 Quit
19 Poi source
20 Landed properties
21 Pre-Socratic philosopher
23 Part of a shoe
25 Coty and Clair
26 $ in the bank
30 Long and thin
33 Diner employees
35 Palindromic honk
36 Stupefied state
39 Quit
43 Chip off the old block
44 New York canal
45 Site of the first use of poison gas
46 Ruby
49 Category
50 Plus feature
53 Palm-face encounter
55 Spectacles
58 Places to go, things to do
63 Tahoe or Cayuga
64 Quit
66 Done
67 Cowboy star Gibson
68 Scrutinize
69 Nathanael or Rebecca
70 Musical composition
71 Lexical meaning

DOWN
1 Common rodents
2 Theatrical lament
3 Limerick laugher quality
4 Land of Los Angeles?
5 Singer Piaf
6 Sneaky person
7 Newman movie
8 Historic times
9 Cellist Ma
10 Shrivel
11 Another time
12 Scandinavian
13 Jogs
18 Golf shop purchase
22 Attractive
24 Epistles
26 Makes a move
27 Type of salmon
28 Ear that can't hear?
29 Boxing letters
31 Japanese drama
32 Rabbit female
34 Confections
36 Wrong
37 Tear up
38 If not, then
40 Dander
41 Puppy bite
42 Take one's pick
46 Gobi, e.g.
47 Makes a c[illegible]ice
48 Mysterious
50 Having the look of love
51 Dred Scott, e.g.
52 __ alive!
54 Printing machine
56 Reverberation
57 Use stores
59 Starter chips
60 Part of speech
61 Bogus bombs
62 Eyelid problem
65 Chit letters



By Gregory E. Paul
Scottdale, PA

5/20/02

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

E	G	G	N	O	G	■	W	O	O	D	P	U	L	P
S	A	R	A	P	E	■	O	R	D	A	I	N	E	R
P	L	O	V	E	R	■	R	E	E	M	E	R	G	E
R	O	S	E	N	B	E	R	G	■	S	T	E	A	L
E	S	S	■	S	I	M	I	A	N	■	Y	E	T	I
S	H	I	M	■	L	I	E	N	E	E	■	L	E	M
S	E	N	O	R	■	T	R	O	W	E	L	■	■	■
O	S	G	O	O	D	■	■	■	S	L	I	V	E	R
■	■	■	T	W	I	T	C	H	■	S	P	I	N	E
S	I	P	■	S	M	I	L	E	R	■	S	O	F	A
K	N	O	T	■	E	R	A	S	E	S	■	L	O	S
I	D	I	O	T	■	A	S	S	E	N	T	E	R	S
M	I	S	R	E	A	D	S	■	F	I	A	N	C	E
P	R	O	T	E	G	E	E	■	E	D	U	C	E	S
S	A	N	E	N	E	S	S	■	D	E	T	E	R	S

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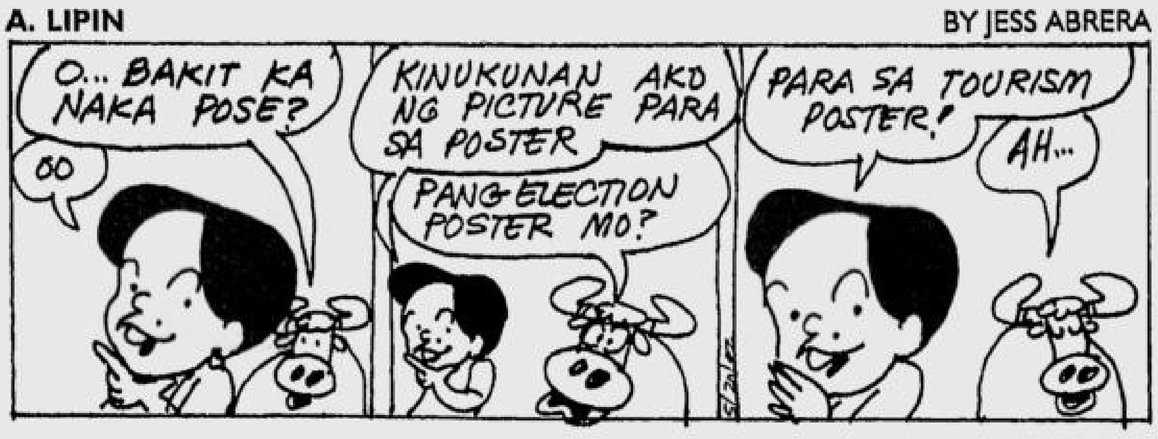
5/20/02

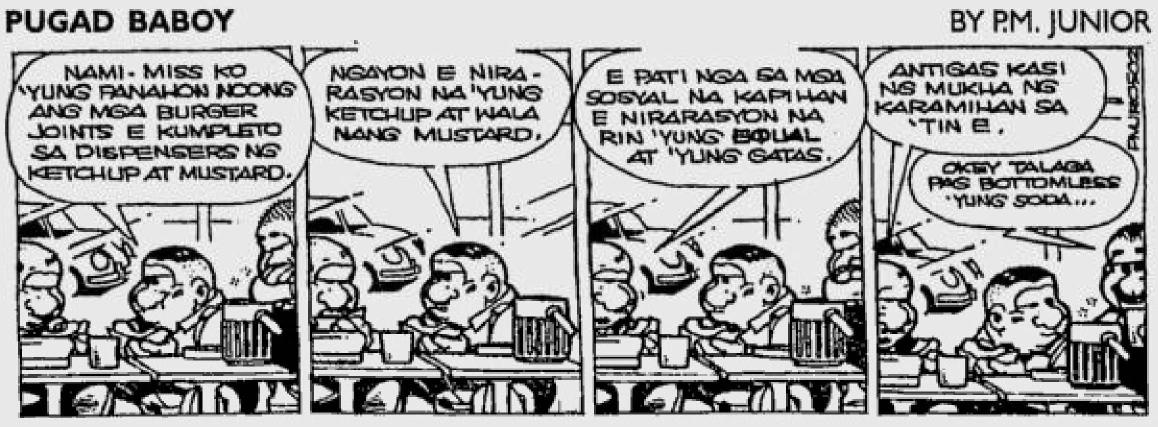
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


O... BAKIT KA NAKA POSE?
OO
KINUKUNAN AKO NG PICTURE PARA SA POSTER
PANG-ELECTION POSTER MO?
PARA SA TOURISM POSTER!
AH...

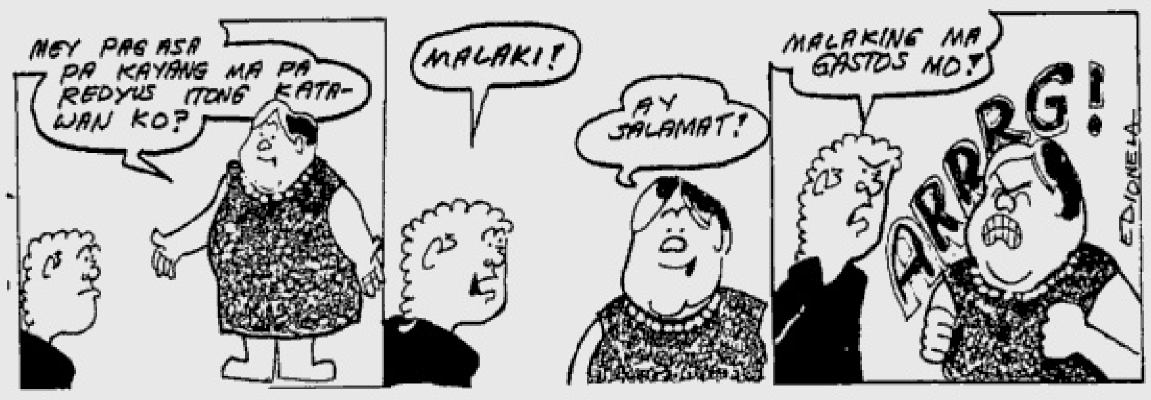
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NAMI-MISS KO 'YUNG PANAHON NOONG ANG MGA BURGER JOINTS E KUMPLETO SA DISPENSERS NG KETCHUP AT MUSTARD.
NGAYON E NIRARASYON NA 'YUNG KETCHUP AT WALA NANG MUSTARD.
E PATI NGA SA MGA SOSYAL NA KAPIHAN E NIRARASYON NA RIN 'YUNG EQUAL AT 'YUNG GATAS.
ANTIGAS KASI NG MUKHA NG KARAMIHAN SA 'TIN E.
OKEY TALAGA PAG BOTTOMLESS 'YUNG SODA...

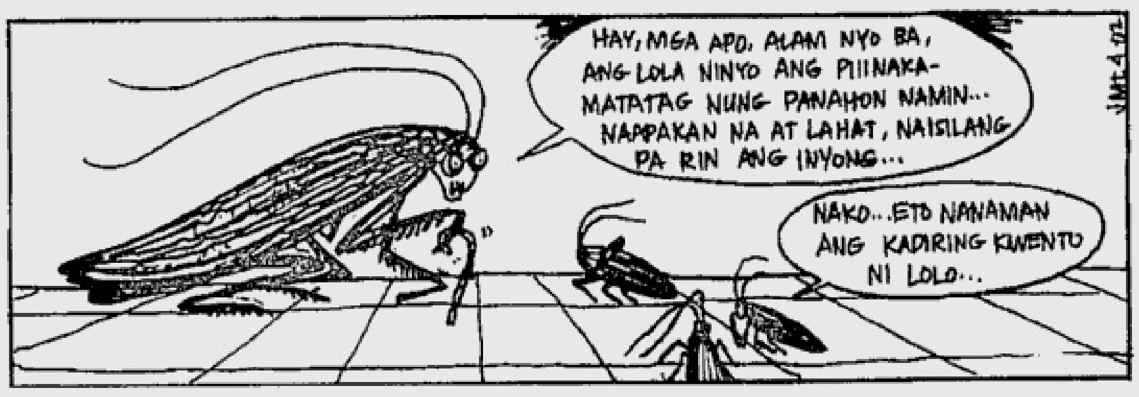
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


MEY PAG ASA PA KAYANG MA PA REDYUS ITONG KATAWAN KO?
MALAKI!
AY SALAMAT!
MALAKING MA GASTOS MO!
ARRRG!
EDIONELA

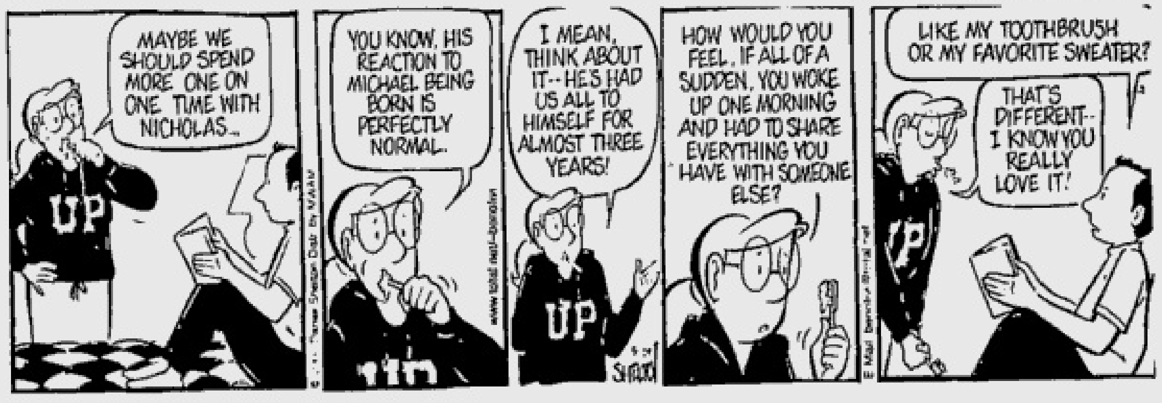
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


HAY, MGA APO, ALAM NYO BA, ANG LOLA NINYO ANG PIIINAKAMATATAG NUNG PANAHON NAMIN... NAPPAKAN NA AT LAHAT, NAISILANG PA RIN ANG INYONG...
NAKO... ETO NANAMAN ANG KADIRING KWENTO NI LOLO...

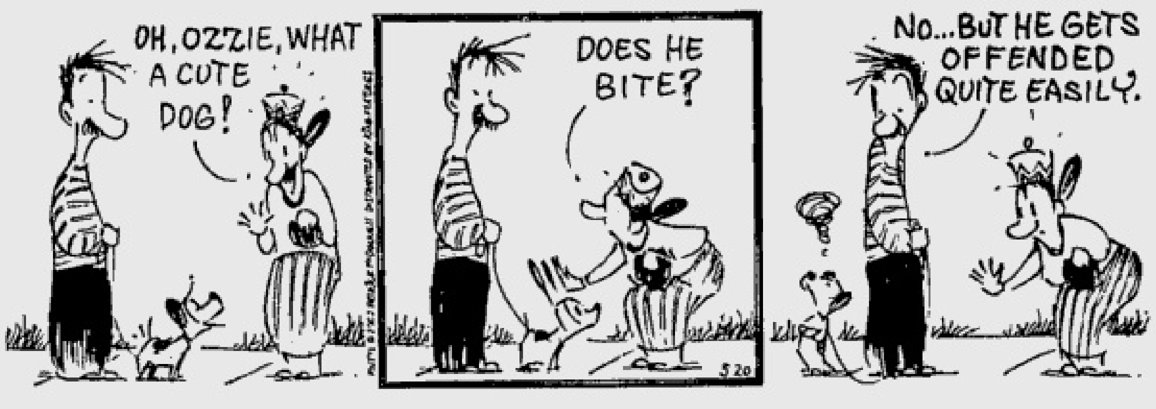
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


MAYBE WE SHOULD SPEND MORE ONE ON ONE TIME WITH NICHOLAS...
YOU KNOW, HIS REACTION TO MICHAEL BEING BORN IS PERFECTLY NORMAL.
I MEAN, THINK ABOUT IT-- HE'S HAD US ALL TO HIMSELF FOR ALMOST THREE YEARS!
HOW WOULD YOU FEEL, IF ALL OF A SUDDEN, YOU WOKE UP ONE MORNING AND HAD TO SHARE EVERYTHING YOU HAVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE?
LIKE MY TOOTHBRUSH OR MY FAVORITE SWEATER?
THAT'S DIFFERENT-- I KNOW YOU REALLY LOVE IT!
UP

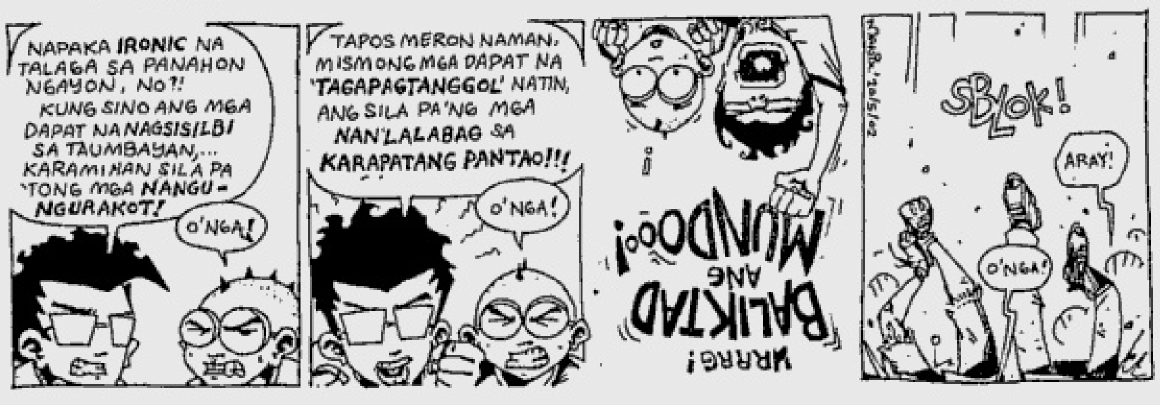
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


OH, OZZIE, WHAT A CUTE DOG!
DOES HE BITE?
NO... BUT HE GETS OFFENDED QUITE EASILY.
5 20

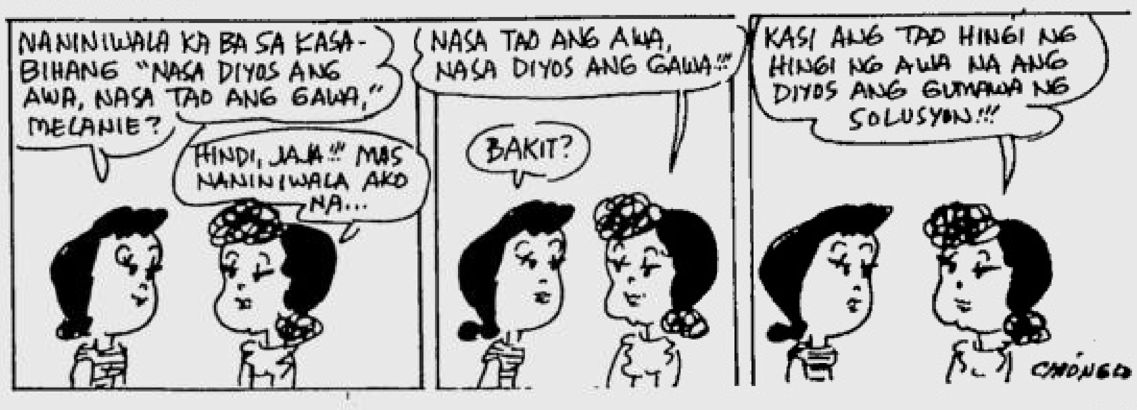
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


NAPAKA IRONIC NA TALAGA SA PANAHON NGAYON, NO?! KUNG SINO ANG MGA DAPAT NA NAGSISILBI SA TAUMBAYAN,... KARAMIHAN SILA PA 'TONG MGA NANGUNGURAKOT!
O'NGA!
TAPOS MERON NAMAN, MISMONG MGA DAPAT NA 'TAGAPAGTANGGOL' NATIN, ANG SILA PA'NG MGA NAN'LALABAG SA KARAPATANG PANTAO!!!
O'NGA!
BALIKTAD ANG MUNDOOO!
MRARG!
SBLOK!
ARAY!
O'NGA!

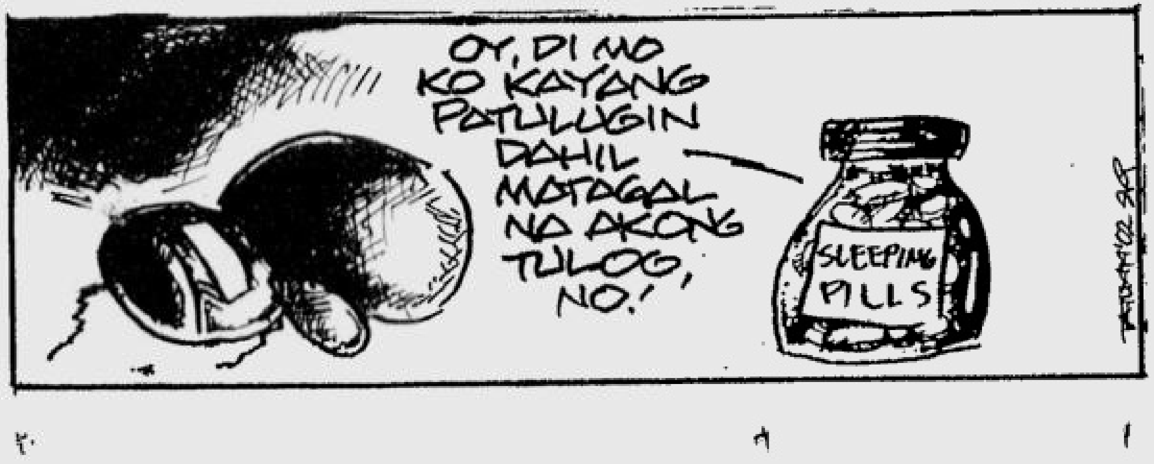
LOVEKNOTS

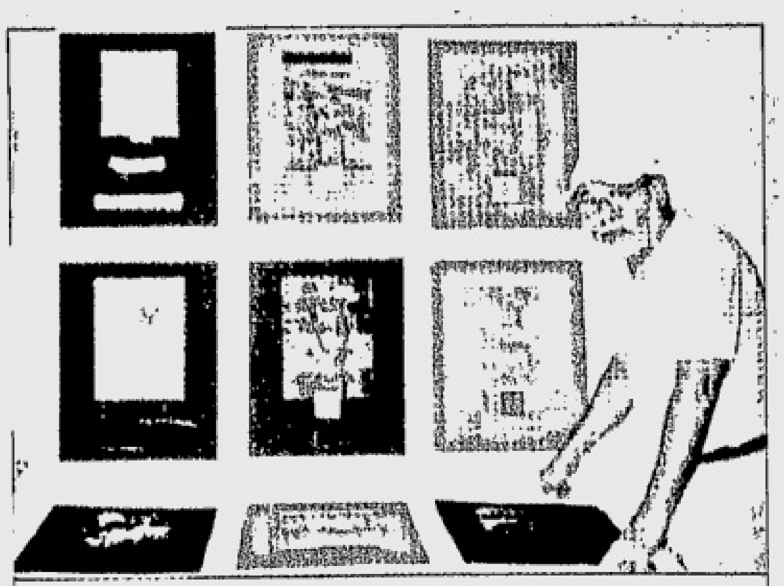
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NANINIWALA KA BA SA KASABIHANG "NASA DIYOS ANG AWA, NASA TAO ANG GAWA," MELANIE?
HINDI, JAJA!!! MAS NANINIWALA AKO NA...
NASA TAO ANG AWA, NASA DIYOS ANG GAWA!!!
BAKIT?
KASI ANG TAO HINGI NG HINGI NG AWA NA ANG DIYOS ANG GUMAWA NG SOLUSYON!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


OY, DI MO KO KAYANG PATULUGIN DAHIL MATAGAL NA AKONG TULOG, NO!
SLEEPING PILLS



THE LUZ Gallery will present Raul Isidro's recent works of mono prints at the Locsin Building corner Ayala and Makati Avenues, Makati City, on May 30 to June 27, open from 4-7 p.m.

Double-edged jars

By James P. Ong
Contributor

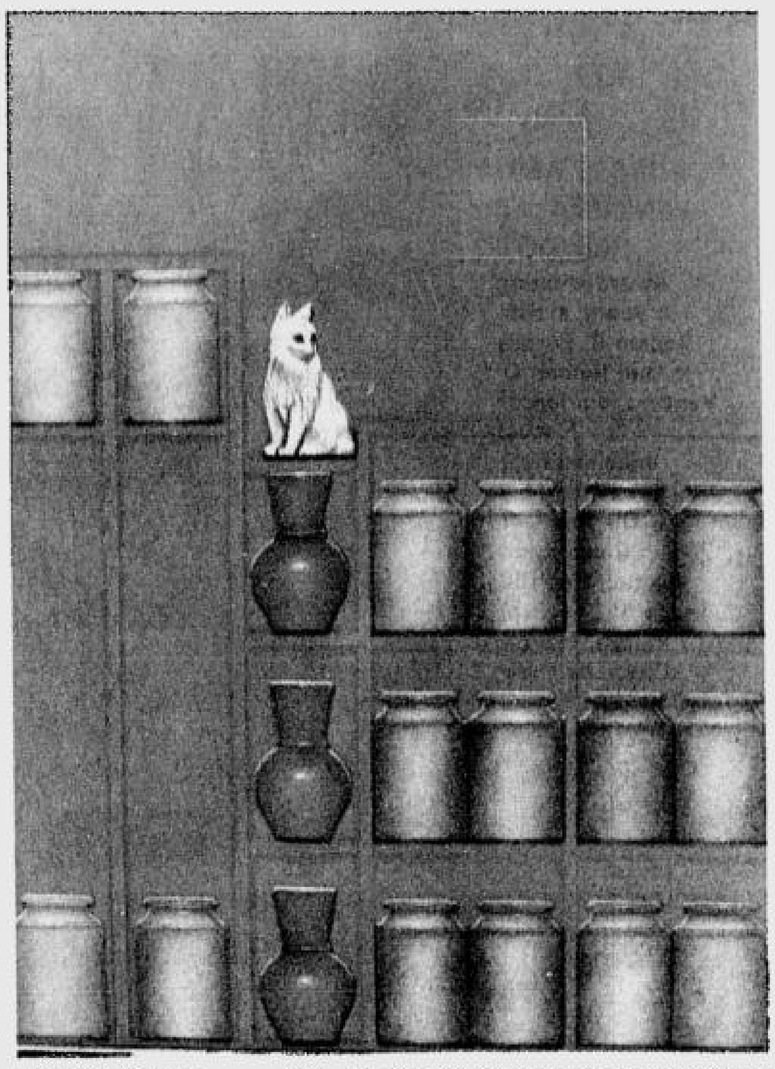
PAINTINGS of bottles and jars that look so real you're afraid to get too near because you might break them. That's how you are bound to feel about the ongoing exhibit "Elements" featuring the works of 30-year-old Nikulas Lebajo.

The artist first made his name when he was just 17, when he won the grand prize in the 22nd Shell National Student Art Competition.

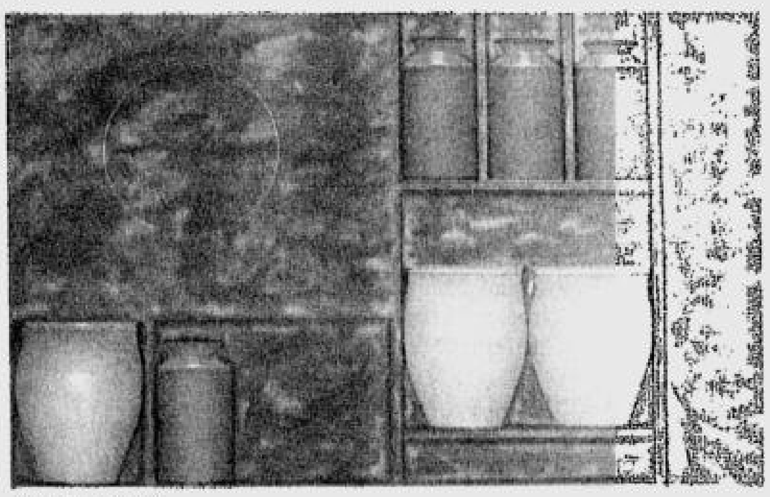
Since then, he has been known for his two-dimensional representational works featuring vessels inspired by his father's collection of ancient ceramic jars, which he remembers from when he was young.

Nikulas Lebajo abandons earth colors in his jars and turns to vivid red, blue and yellow

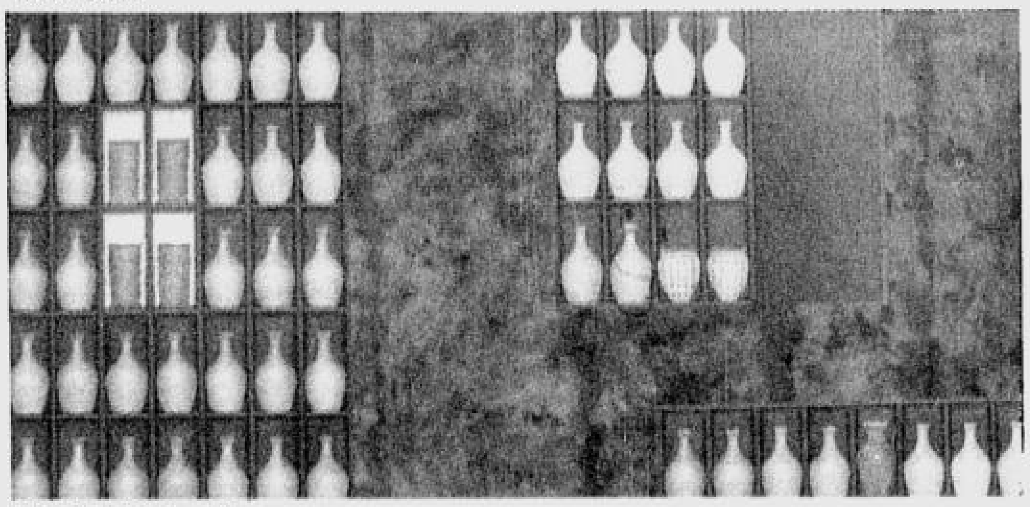
Lebajo's previous exhibitions have been praised because of their trompe l'oeil quality, his classic approach to composition and perspective, and the effort he puts in their details—making sure that despite the uniformity of their shapes, each piece is distinct from the others with a crack here, a peel there.



"PUTING Pusa"



"ELEMENTS"



"POINTING Bone"

In "Elements," he says goodbye to the safe earth colors he normally uses, and generously spreads vivid tones of red, blue and yellow.

He also breaks the monotony—if one can call it that—of the precisely shelved jars by placing surprise objects on top of shelves, like a paper boat in "Paper Boat" and a ceramic cat in "Puting Pusa" ("White Cat") .

A total of 11 works are shown here, mostly oil on canvas. The biggest piece, "Pointing Bone," measures 4 ft x 8 ft.

It is Lebajo's supreme achievement that, with the minimalism of his works, he is able to catch the attention and curiosity of anyone who so much as glances at his paintings.

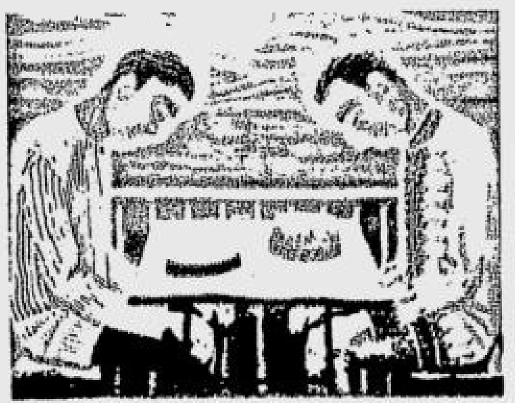
This same attention and curiosity will inevitably turn either into quiet admiration as one is lulled to relaxation, or anger because the perfection of his works is unsettling, especially for people who desire just a bit of control and disorder.

Rarely are paintings so double-edged.

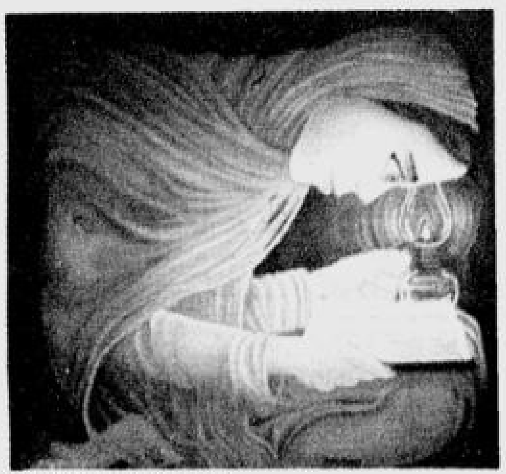
"Elements" runs until May 26 at the Gallery Nine, 4/L SM Megamall A

Rosel's consciousness art at Philamlife

KNOWING the impact that art has on the development of civilization and on the growth of human consciousness, Tita Rosel believes that the first work of an artist is not the transformation of matter into some artifacts, but the transformation of the artist's own consciousness. This artist from Majayjay, Laguna, has resolved to work on herself in order to realize the real self within through constant awareness, study, service, play and discipline.



"PRAYER"



"AFGHAN Woman"

How far has her works evolved? That would be difficult to judge.

Just as Ananda Coomaraswamy, an art historian, says, "It is not by an intellectual or categorical activity that we can judge the intensity of an artist's vision. We cannot judge except by our own response, and whether or not we can respond will depend on our own state of grace."

Her second solo show runs until May 24 at the lobby of Philamlife Building, U.N. Avenue, Ermita, Manila. She will give a drawing workshop for free at the Adamson University Integrated Community Service. Call Josie, 732-6995 / 0919-646 3356 or Lilia, 524-2011 local 135.

AAP finds a home

From page D8

promptu events, including their regular nude sketching sessions on Saturdays.

The quiet, unassuming AAP president, who finished fine arts at Feati University, has decided to temporarily forego his painting chores to be able to attend to his duties, besides quitting from his other extra-curricular jobs in other artists' groups, like the Pintanaw; the Saturday Group and the Kontempo, knowing fully well that the AAP presidency is, in itself, a full-time, demanding role.

Sarmiento's first big project is now in place—the Lakbay Sining national art demo tour—and, to date, it has been staged in Bulacan (Paombong), La Union (San Fernando) and Pangasinan (Lingayen). Through this project, the AAP has begun to work closely with the various members coming from the regions outside Metro Manila, interacting with them through art exhibits and discussions.

The results have been very encouraging. Their next stop would take them to Iloilo and Binangonan, Rizal.

The AAP is, of course, most identified with the AAP Annual competition, an event which every artist looks forward to. For the AAP, it is both as a showcase of the year's artistic output as well as a major fund-raising event for the organization. This year, the AAP Annual will be preceded by a semi-annual in June, but only in the painting category, with full sponsorship already pledged by the AMA Group of Companies.

Sarmiento's biggest dream is, of course, to be able to build an AAP Art Center. The AAP Board has already spoken to Ramon Orlina, who is the Artists' Association of the Philippines Foundation head, and he has expressed willingness to help the group. (The foundation is also in charge of the book now in the works, "Fifty Years of the AAP.")

As a result of the economic slowdown, the art community has of late been beset by problems related to the buying and selling of art works. But even if times are hard, and art also severely hit, Sarmiento remains confident that artists will overcome these problems.

AAP, he says, is committed to endorse young and struggling artists to galleries, help them find sponsors, and offer them opportunities to participate in group shows. This way, young artists can be properly inducted into the arts community.

Still, the new board led by Sarmiento is intent on pursuing the AAP's golden dream—building the AAP Art Center. This has long been the dream of AAP leaders past and present, and Sarmiento is not about to let the opportunity pass without realizing the dream of his forebears, from Purita Kalaw-Ledesma through Jose Joya to Leo Benesa and Egay Fernandez. A real home AAP can call its own.

The economics of a fund-raising campaign will invariably enlist the help of all artists, young and old, famous and yet unknown, who each will have a role to play in translating this dream into a tangible reality.

We wish the men and women of AAP all the luck in the world as they begin to embark on this journey, with a new, dynamic leadership to steer them by, and the ultimate reward of the indispensability of art.

E-mail the author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com

Experimental films and videos by the Bay

THE CULTURAL Center of the Philippines (CCP) presents "Manila Film Center; Full Moons by the Bay featuring XXXPerimento!!!" on May 24, 7 p.m. at the CCP Liwasang Paraiso (MFC Rear Steps, facing the Manila Bay).

The evening program will feature experimental films and videos in cooperation with the group eKsperim[E]nto, including the works of Sari Lluch Dalena, Husemaria Sescon, Ted Arago, Paulo Villaluna and Roxlee.

Also on the program is the repeat performance of the experimental play "Amanda's Place," directed by stage actor Roeder. A tragicomedy about fear and overcoming fear, the play features a cast of young actors: Maria Sigua, Ariel Vidanes, Denison Camarador, Wendy Misa, Raiann Espiritu, Gil de Castro, Jay R. Contreras, Lorena Marasigan, Dodil Alaan and Chester Conde.

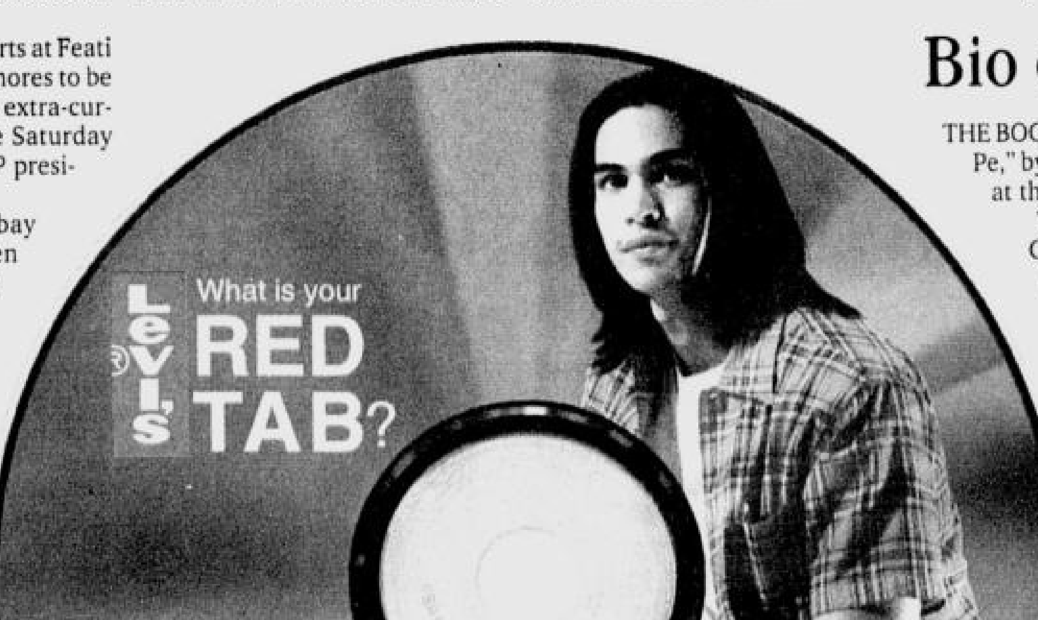
The premiere of six new short films on six short stories by titans of literature, most of them National Artists, highlights the evening presentation. The 3rd CCP Freefest Indie Workshop outputs are based on Franz Arcellana's "The Yellow Shawl," Bienvenido Santos' "End to Laughter," Edith Tiempo's "The Corals," NVM Gonzalez's "On the Ferry," F. Sionil Jose's "Dream Videos" and Nick Joaquin's "May Day Eve."

"Manila Film Center: Full Moons by the Bay" is a monthly presentation of the CCP that also includes open-mike poetry and dramatic readings, alternative/world/folk bands and musicians and the best of Pinoy independent and classic world cinema. Plus henna tattoo artists, fortune tellers, "tiangges," etc. Admission is free. Call 0917-3352043 or 0919-2363041, or email ourdailyplanet @hotmail.com.

Bio of Appeals Justice Pe

THE BOOK "Ayon sa Kalooban: Talambuhay ni Mahistrado Cecilio L. Pe," by Dr. Josefina L. Purisima, will be launched today, 3:30 p.m. at the Court of Appeals Centennial Auditorium.

The late Justice Cecilio L. Pe was an associate justice of the Court of Appeals upon his demise in 1990. He held other distinguished positions, including secretary and executive director of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, vice president of the International Law Association (Philippine branch), vice president of the Catholic Lawyers Guild of the Philippines, founder and first president of the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Faculty Union, professor of the UST College of Law and UST Graduate School, and bar reviewer in several universities in Metro Manila. He also served in his community as president of the Damar Village Associate for several years. He authored various books on the Constitution and "Katarungang Pambarangay", and was the first editor of the Lawyer's Review.



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UST offers new programs in Cultural Heritage Studies

From page D2

education and programs, and researching and writing local history.

The professorial roster includes National Museum Director Corazon S. Alvina; Esperanza Gatbonton, heritage consultant of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA); NCCA consultant and former National Museum director Jesus Peralta; Reynaldo Inovero, historic preservation chief of the National Historical Institute; Regalado Trota Jose, chair of the NCCA Committee on Monuments and Sites and national coordinator of the Committee for the Cultural Heritage of the Church of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines; Metropolitan Museum director Victorino M. Manalo; Bernardita Reyes, assistant director of the Archdiocesan Archives and Museum of Manila; UST College of Architecture secretary Cesar Velasco; cultural heritage planner and INQUIRER columnist Augusto Villalon; UST professorial lecturer and Unesco Commissioner Florentino H. Hornedo; former UST rector Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa, O.P.; Fr. Jose Antonio E. Aureada, O.P, UST vice rector for academic affairs.; Fr. John Funelas, O.P., dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the UST Ecclesiastical Faculties; and UST College of Architecture professor Norma Alarcon.

Applications are now being accepted. Call the UST Graduate School at 731-5396 or 731-3101 local 8247, or fax 740-9732. E-mail odqs@ustcc. ust.edu.ph.

You may also write to the Graduate School dean Lilian J. Sison or to the faculty secretary Michael Vasco.

Course brochures are available at the UST Museum of Arts and Sciences and the UST Graduate School.

AAP finds a home

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

THE ART Association of the Philippines, more famously known by its acronym, turned 54 this year—truly a mature age by any reckoning, especially for an artists' organization that professes to be the oldest hereabouts.

Age notwithstanding, the more important consideration is that the AAP is very much alive and well—and, indeed, promisingly hale and hearty. It has, after all, weathered the worst of times, having overcome the countless controversies that have hounded it in the past, and admirably continues to survive the onslaught of time and political upheavals, as it faces another challenging period ahead.

Sometime in January this year, a new AAP board was duly elected into office, that would administer its affairs for the next two years. Taking over the reins of the previous controversy-wracked board led by president Reuben Ramas Cañete is visual artist Fidel Sarmiento (president), with fellow painters Romeo Gutierrez as vice president for internal affairs, Salvador Convocar, vice president for external affairs, Karlota Isla Contreras, secretary, Roger Santos, treasurer, and Mario Patdu, auditor.

Other AAP officers include Teza Cornes, PRO, Alfredo Liongoren, regional affairs officer, Aris Bagtas, Eghai Roxas and Danilo Santiago, board directors.

A LAKBAY Sining Tour hosted by the AAP and Bulacan members

Expectedly, the first thing Sarmiento did upon assuming office was to make sure that the AAP funds were intact, which, according to former president Ramon Orlina, who sat longest in the post, had been safely deposited in the bank.

Thereupon, Sarmiento promptly started to look for a place that would house the AAP office. For, truth to tell, AAP had remained homeless all these 54 years, its office usually found in the home of its incumbent president.

Unbelievably, the country's most famous art organization had been virtually squatting in some temporary venue, changing its address every time a new leader is elected.

Sarmiento, a painter who has won numerous prizes for his highly realistic renderings of old colonial houses, finally found the space he needed in the sprawling area adjacent to Café Ysabel on P. Guevara in San Juan. It is, of course, a modest, 20-sq-m, one-floor affair, which has been generously offered by its owner, with rental fees chargeable to the equivalent amount of artworks.

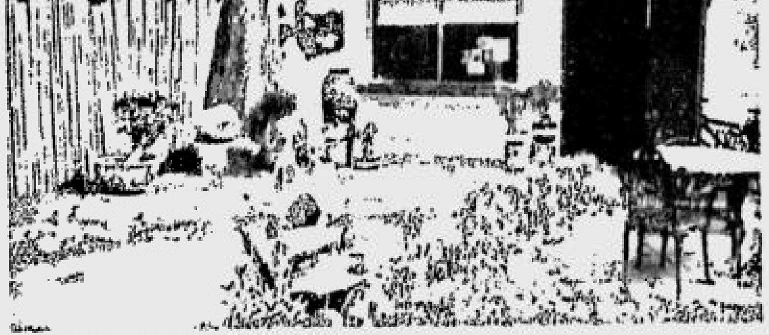
> The new officers of the foremost artists' group in the country finds a place to rebuild a family

Today, the AAP board has a place to meet and discuss projects (which is every first Thursday of the month), and a venue for im-

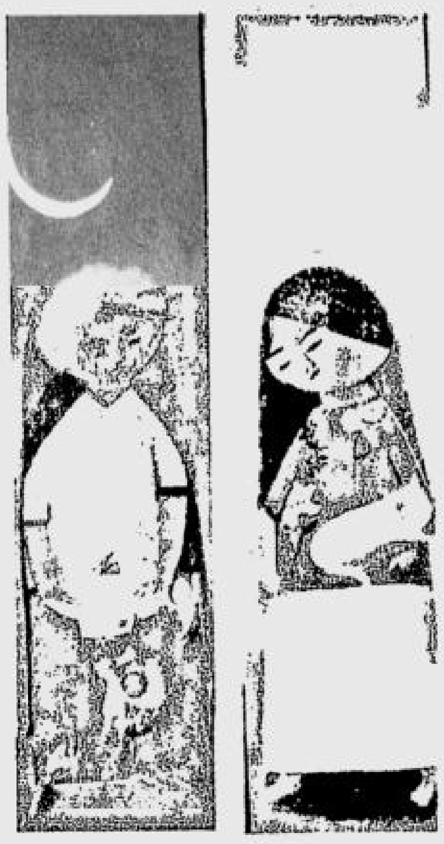
AAP/ p.D7

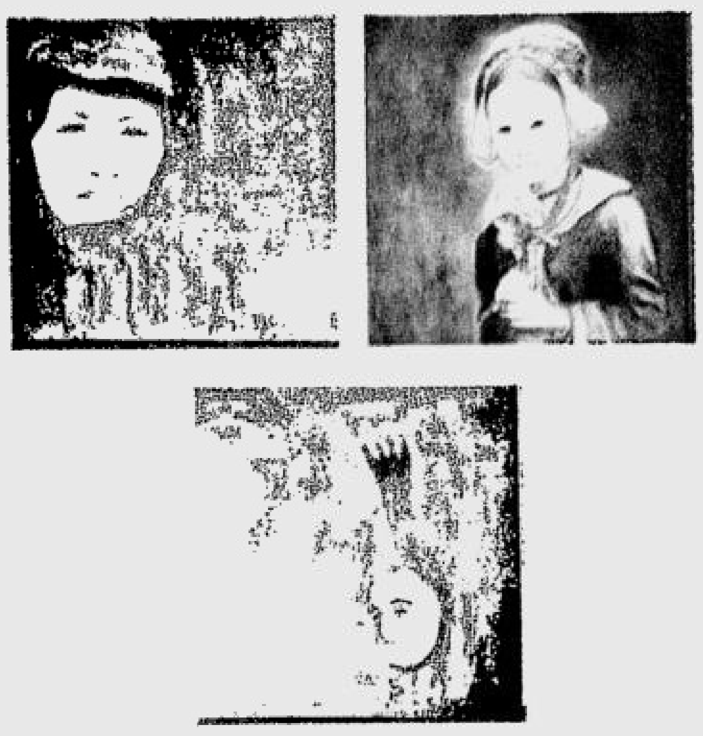
A NUDE sketching session

AN INTERACTION session with officers led by Fidel Sarmiento in the Lakbay Sining tour of Pangasinan


AAP'S new home in San Juan

FORBES AND VENTURA AT RED DOT
Award-winning young artists Romeo R. Forbes Jr. and Roldan C. Ventura join forces in "Mutual Individuality," which opened May 18 at the Red Dot Gallery and Restaurant, 100 Perea St., Legazpi Village, Makati City. The show ends June 7. Call 816-2877.





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LIFESTYLE

FROM THE AUTHOR OF LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE
SWIFT AS DESIRE
LAURA ESQUIVEL

Laura Esquivel's ode to her father

Swift as Desire
By Laura Esquivel
Translated by Stephen Lytle
Crown Publishers, New York, 2001
208 pages

By Ruel S. De Vera

REVIEW

IT'S often been said that a masterful first novel can become an obstacle for the writer later on because eclipsing that great literary debut could prove to be difficult.

Laura Esquivel, author of that culinary cum literary feast called "Like Water for Chocolate," knows this well. The overwhelming success of her first novel (translated from "Como Agua Para Chocolate"), which eventually became a motion picture, challenges her to match or surpass the inventive playfulness of that first work.

Esquivel's third novel, "Swift as Desire" (translated by Stephen Lytle from Esquivel's "Tan Veloz como el Deseo," which was in Spanish) is her latest attempt at matching "Chocolate's" distinctive flavor. While "Desire" is a fascinating, enjoyable read, it's still no "Chocolate"—instead, it may just prove to be a new, defining moment for Esquivel; a different direction for her to take.

Uneven

Granted, "Desire" is often uneven. Mov-

LAURA/ p.E4

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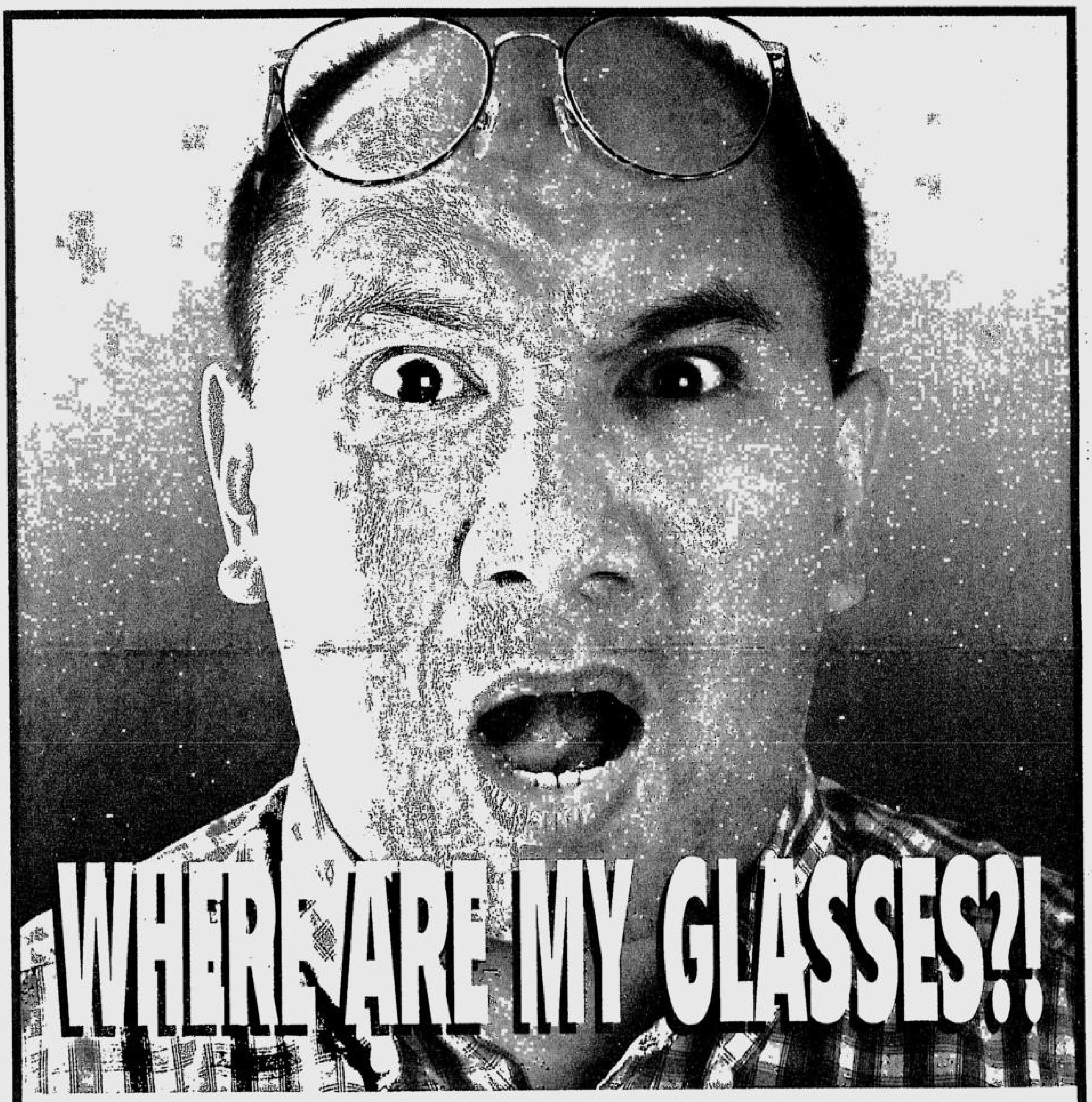
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15 fellows to 9th Iligan National Writers Workshop

WRITER Jaime An Lin

THE OFFICE of the President of the Philippines, the Mindanao Creative Writers Group, the MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, with the Iligan City Government, CJA Printing Press and Anvil Publishers, have chosen the 15 writing fellows to the Ninth Iligan National Writers Workshop on May 27-30 in Iligan City.

The 15 writing fellows selected out of 86 applicants and 92 entries from all over the country are:

Luzon—(Poetry-English/Filipino) Elizabeth M. Mapula, Manila, University of Santo Tomas; Olive S. Hernandez, Makati City, Ateneo de Manila University; (Fiction-English/Filipino) Pearlsha Baylon Abubakar, Angono, Rizal, UP Diliman; U.Z. Elizerio, Quezon City, UP Diliman; and (Play-Filipino) Jose Dennis C. Teodosio, Angono, Rizal, UP Diliman. Alternate: Kate Alizon Ramil, San Pablo City, De La Salle University.

Visayas—(Poetry-English/Filipino/Kinaray-a) Jean Claire A. Dy, Dumaguete City, Silliman University; Ritchie M. Rondez, San Jose, Antique, St. Anthony's College; (Fiction-English) Ian Fermin Rosales Casocot, Dumaguete City, Silliman; Lee de Guzman, Cebu City, University of San Carlos; and (Play-English) Glen Sevilla Mas, Iloilo City, West Visayas State University. Alternate: Oscar Moncada Monje, Loang, Samar, UST.

Mindanao—(Poetry-English/Cebuano/Filipino) Cheryll Dirige Fiel, Pagadian City, Silliman; Crisanto V. Cayon, Davao City, Ateneo de Davao University; Gabriela Alejandra Dans Lee, Davao City, UP Mindanao; and Robert B. Bagalay, Puerto Princesa, Palawan State University; (Fiction/English) Gardy Ramos Banos, Cagayan de Oro City, Ateneo de Cagayan-Xavier University. Alternate: Misael M. Paranial, Davao City, Ateneo de Davao University.

Panelists and lecturers for the 9th INWW and the one-day Seminar on the Teaching of Philippine Literature for Mindanao's literature teachers to be held on May 25 are: Bienvenido Lumbera, Leoncio P. Deriada, Erlinda Kintanar Alburo, Jaime An Lim, Anthony Tan, German V. Gervacio, the 9th INWW director Christine Godinez-Ortega and this year's keynote lecturer Rosario Cruz Lucero, prize-winning writer and associate dean, College of Arts and Letters, UP Diliman.

Highlights of the INWW include the launching of the 8th INWW proceedings titled, "Return to the Native," edited by An Lim, Godinez-Ortega and Tan and with an introduction by Merlie M. Alunan.

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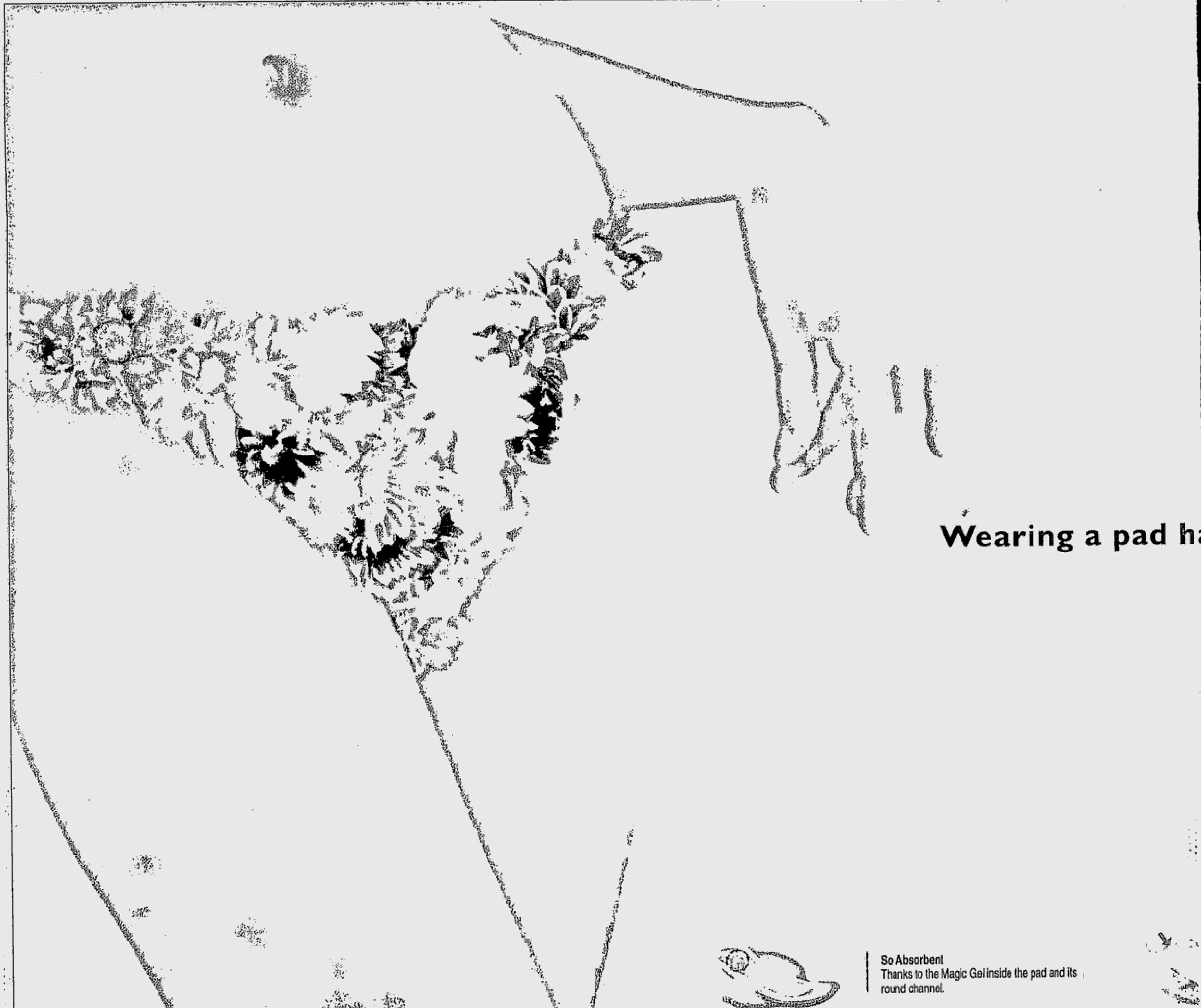

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Books on Pinoy dances and Chinese health art

ANVIL Publishing, Inc. and National Bookstore, Inc. announce the release of "Sayaw: Philippine Dances" by Reynaldo G. Alejandro and Amanda Abad Santos-Gana, an attempt to "rediscover, redefine and document Philippine cultural history." Noted dance groups such as Ballet Philippines, Bayanihan Philippine National Dance Company, Dance Sport Council of the Philippines, Kaloob Philippine Music and Dance Ministry, Philippine Ballet Theater, Powerdance, Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, and Villa Escudero Dance Troupe, among others, are featured in the book.

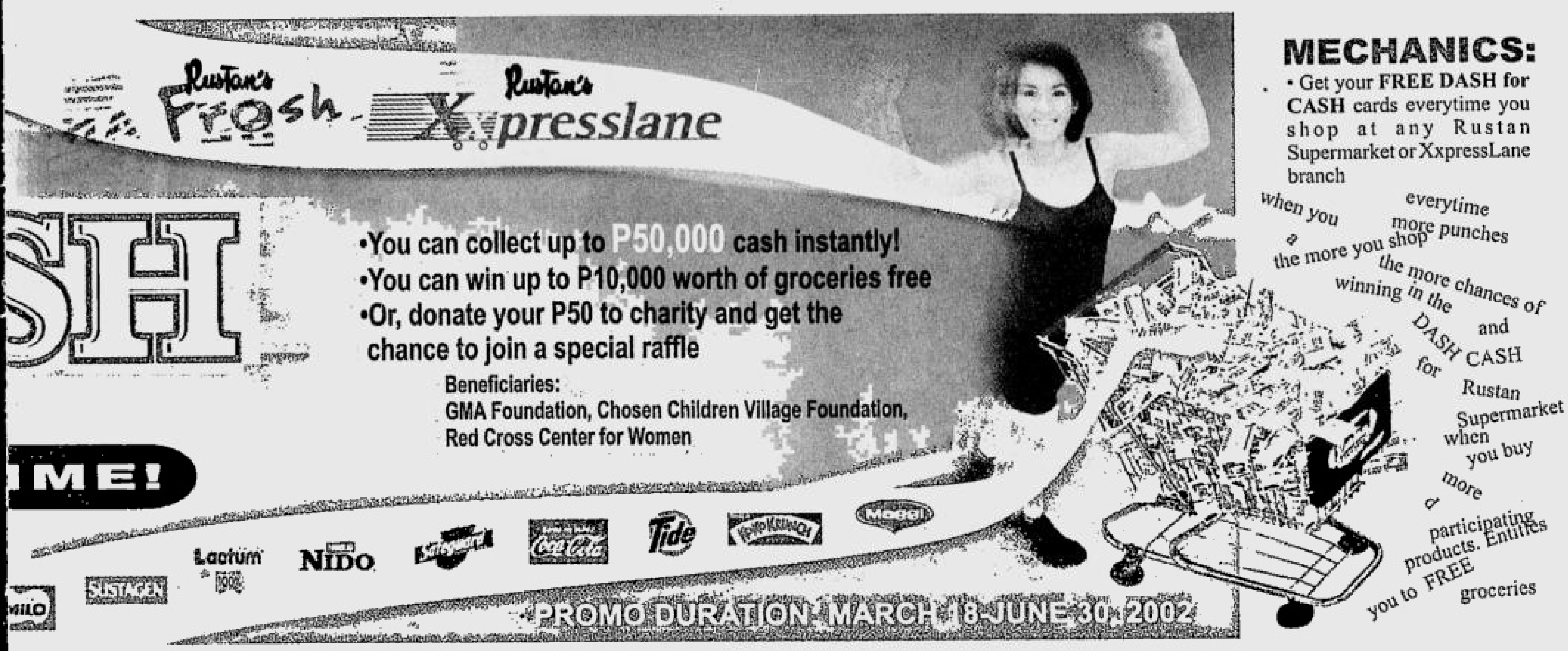
"Sayaw" traces the development of Philippine dance, from the Pre-hispanic to Hispanic-influenced dances—described as "unique among Southeast Asian dances" for their "deceptively Western, deceptively Oriental" character—to the dances enjoyed today. The authors also acknowledge the dances of different ethnolinguistic groups from the Northern Highlands, Muslim South and traditionalist communities as an "inspirational source of new choreographies and contemporary artistry." This colorful chronicle of Filipino beauty and grace is supported by over 200 vivid photographs of the country's foremost dance groups. "Sayaw" is a follow-up to Alejandro's "Philippine Dance: Mainstream and Crosscurrents (1978)."

Reynaldo G. Alejandro was artistic director-choreographer of the Philippine Dance Company of New York and the Reynaldo Alejandro Dance Theater, Inc., the first Filipino-American modern dance company in the United States. He is also a prolific writer and author of several books on Philippine culture. Amanda Abad Santos-Gana, the book's photographer and designer, studied photography in the US and Europe. Her works have been featured in American, Singaporean, Japanese and Indonesian publications.

Oneness book

On Friday, May 24, 6 p.m., the International Sheng Zhen Society will launch the much-awaited updated version of "Sheng Zhen Healing Qigong" and "Wuji Yuan Gong", now known as "A Return to Oneness" at Powerbooks on Arnaiz Avenue in Makati. These two publications have become invaluable handbooks to the growing number of practitioners all over the world of the different forms of "Sheng Zhen Qigong", the qigong of unconditional love.

Li Jun Feng, the much-loved master and head of the International Sheng Zhen Society, will come to Manila especially for the event. Master Li is a living embodiment of qigong—a life of happiness and contentment, and in perfect harmony with oneself and one's surroundings. He was formerly the head coach of the world-renowned Beijing Wushu Team of the People's Republic of China. He was also a movie actor and director until he gave everything up to concentrate on the teaching and practice of the Sheng Zhen forms of qigong. Today, he serves as adviser to the World Academic Society of Medical Qigong and the Qigong Science Research Association of China.



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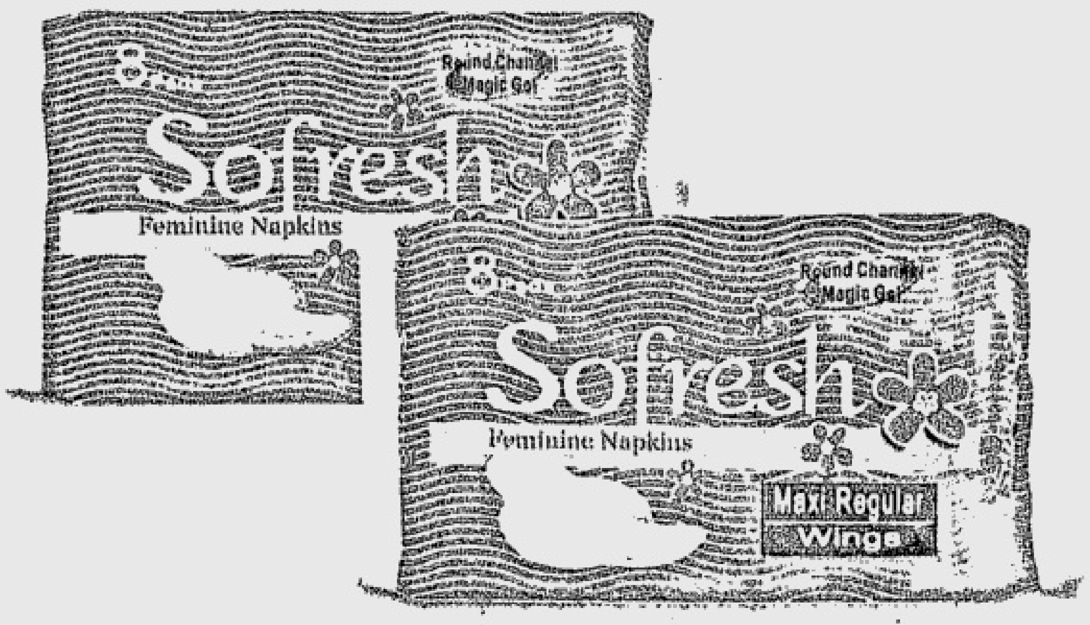

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Laura Esquivel's ode to her father

From page E1

ing from one disparate element to another without a moment's notice. Esquivel also lets her prose get entangled in rather tedious discussions of science, religion and even New Age thinking.

But one does not read Esquivel for a complex plot. One reads her because her voluptuous language and ear for lyricism is one of modern fiction's true guilty pleasures: the equivalent of coming home with something from the candy store: "To him, love was a life force, the most important thing he could ever feel. It was only when one felt its impulse that one could forget about oneself and think about someone else, and wish to be near her, touch her, become one with her. And for that, it wasn't necessary to have money. Desire is enough."

Esquivel's prose seems, if anything, even thicker and more syrupy than usual as she tells the story of Júbilo, the telegraph operator who has the uncanny ability to instinctively know what other people really feel—and not what they claim to be saying.

"Desire's" plot emanates from the present, where the elderly Júbilo, now beset with the advance stages of Parkinson's disease, is being cared for by his daughter Lluvia. The novel is partly narrated from Lluvia's viewpoint, partly from a third-person perspective. The plot gets underway as Lluvia finds a strange photograph and starts to ask difficult questions about Júbilo and his estranged wife Lucha.

> The author of 'Like Water for Chocolate' uses some familiar and personal ingredients to concoct an unevenly romantic confection of a novel

Questioning

That questioning takes the reader back to early 20th century, moving from the tiny, dusty pueblo of Huichapan, where Júbilo grows up learning about his Mayan heritage and yet in love with the telegraph machine and the radio. Esquivel piles on the mystical and mysterious qualities that have always occupied the premise of her novels.

In Huichapan, Júbilo becomes the town telegraph operator and gets involved in the lives of his people. Soon enough, he weds lovely Lucha, but their story takes many notably predictable twists from there, all done with an unabashedly romantic and fateful perspective.

The wooing and lovemaking between the two is vintage Esquivel, feverish and elemental. Death, heartbreak and simple miscommunication—plus a bit of that magical folklore Esquivel has always peppered her fiction with—bring us to the present.

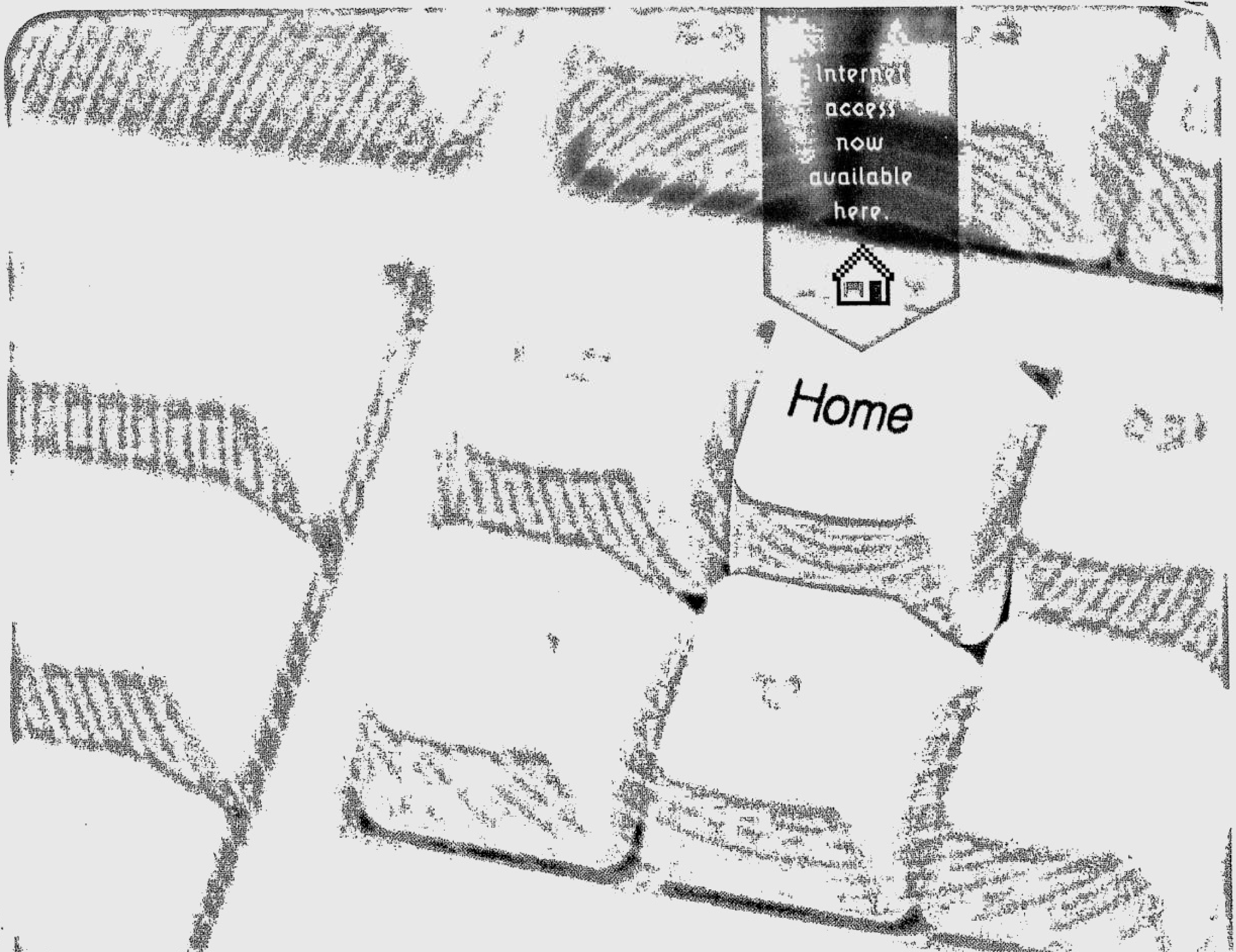
It appears, however, that Júbilo's adventures, as convenient as they are, may not be the focal point of "Desire." The book is more about Lluvia's love for her fading father, and the magic of the telegraph machine.

Even as "Desire" taps out its conclusion, it becomes clear that Esquivel has made this book her personal letter to her own father, himself a telegraph operator. What seems like a surreal, folkloric love story set in Mexico turns out to be a rather emotional and old-fashioned ode to Esquivel's papa.

Despite the novel's oftentimes saccharine feel, it vibrates with a newfound urgency owing from the intensely personal quality Esquivel has imbued it with. This visibly brief novel is much less a sugar-coated Hispanic love story from the author of "Like Water for Chocolate," and much more an inner look into the heart and mind of Esquivel.

"Swift As Desire" may not be as flavorful as her first novel, but it feels closer to Laura Esquivel's heart.

Available at National Bookstore and PowerBooks



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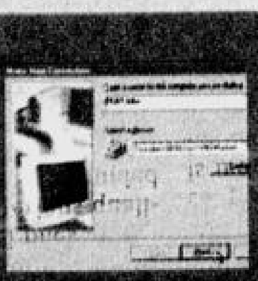
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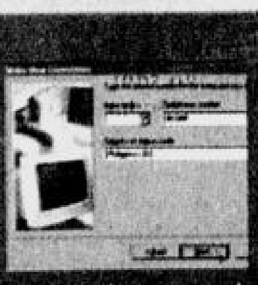
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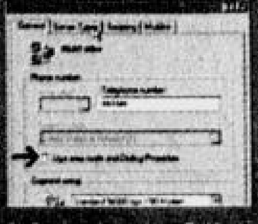
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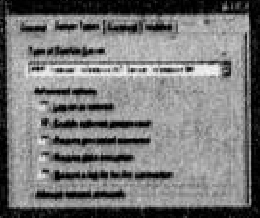
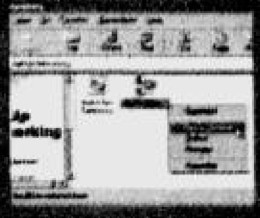

6. Select the "Server Types" tab. Make sure that the "Type of Dial-up Server" uses PPP and that the only items that are checked are "Enable Software Compression" and "TCP/IP". Click "OK".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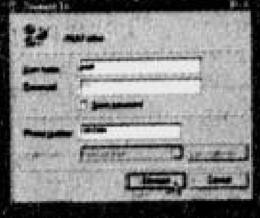
8. To start surfing, double-click on the "shortcut to PLDT Vibe" dialer icon on your Desktop. Then enter "pldt" on the username field and "vibe" on the password field on the dialer then click on the "connect" button.

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LIFESTYLE

The legacy of Lino Brocka

Or why three Brocka movies landed on the Urian's Top 10 Filipino movies of the last generation

By Lito B. Zulueta

WHAT a difference a foreign listing makes! After "Maynila... Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag" was chosen as one of the 150 masterpieces of world cinema in the new book "Film: The Critics' Choice" (edited by Goeff Andrew, with a foreword by Bernardo Bertolucci, Ivy Press), the late Lino Brocka is getting a much-needed reckoning.

Not that he has been forgotten. Since his death in 1991, and because of the artistic wasteland he has left in his wake, there has always been a pining for the years when Brocka catapulted Philippine cinema into world recognition. The decade after his demise either saw the hope of many rekindled, or extinguished at the sight of anyone emerging from the horizon who was remotely connected or altogether disconnected with Brocka.

Perhaps the more overriding feeling was one of despair. There was hardly fanfare when Brocka's 10th death anniversary was marked last year. The silence sounded the death knell to quality Philippine cinema. In a way, it also sounded the death knell to the Brocka legacy. There would be no resurrection, it seemed.

But lately, Brocka is on a roll. On Wednesday, May 22, the Cultural Center of the Philippines will pay tribute to the late National Artist with an exhibit of his mementos, the screening of two documentaries (including one by a foreigner, Christian Blackwood's 90-minute "Signed: Lino Brocka," which details the filmmaker's activism and socialist inclinations), and the showing of his masterpiece, "Maynila." It will be, for all intents and purposes, a Brocka festival.

ALAJAR and Phillip Salvador in "Kapit sa Patalim"

In the run-up to the death anniversary, the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino, to film critics group marking its 25th year, has named three of Brocka's movies—"Maynila", "Insiang", and "Orapronobis" (OPN)—as three of the 10 best movies of the last 25-30 years. Even before it was reported that Andrew's book had included Brocka in the list of all-time greats of world cinema, the Manunuri had already consolidated the survey conducted among past and present members. The result was quite decisive: "Maynila" garnered the most number of votes and a near unanimous critical approbation. Closely following were, "Insiang" and "OPN." Nearly breaking into the Top 10 were "Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang," "Jaguar" and "Kapit sa Patalim: Bayan Ko." (Others in the Top 10 were Ishmael Bernal's "Nunal sa Tubig," "Manila by Night: City After Dark" and "Himala"; Mike de Leon's "Batch '81," "Kisapmata" and "Bayaning Third World"; and Eddie Romero's "Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon?")

Herald

Among the list, "Maynila" is the oldest, having been shown in 1975. When one considers that three of the movies that made it in the Top 10 were made in 1976 ("Insiang", "Nunal" and "Ganito"), one appreciates the importance of "Maynila". It heralded the full artistic flowering that was to come in 1976, which marked the peak of the second golden age of Philippine cinema. In fact, "Maynila" prefigured the picaresque and even epic scale of "Ganito", the sociological ambitiousness of "Nunal", and the tragic force of "Insiang". Since the cinematographer of "Maynila" was the neophyte Mike de Leon, it also seemed to foreshadow de Leon's films as well. When one considers that "Maynila" is all of this and beyond this, one better appreciates its importance. It will be the movie against which other Filipino movies will be gauged and graded.

"Maynila" represents an artistic watershed for Philippine film. Those who first saw it in 1975 were shocked at its technical bravura—the exacting production design and art direction that tried to make sense out of the chaos of the city; the cinematography that approximated the ghastly quality of the city, its false allurements and sinister enchantments; the editing which was well-paced and lyrical (the final sequence of the lynching of Julio Madiaga and the fade-in of Ligaya Paraiso basking in the sun is a poignant and an unforgettable montage); and its groundbreaking music that combined ethnic and semi-electronic instrumentation. Then there were the

THE LEGACY/ p.F7

Arts/ Design
GINA Alajar and R.R. Herrera in the political drama, "Orapronobis"

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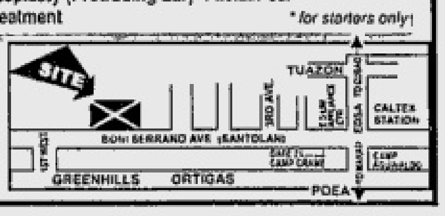

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NAPOLEON Abueva, Rita Ledesma, Cora Alvina, Gemma Cruz Araneta and Ino Manalo

PHOTOS BY BETOY JOHNSON

Quiapo exhibit draws culturati

DIPLOMATIC SWIRL

By Amiga

THE METROPOLITAN Museum and its new director, Ino Manalo, opened an exhibition titled "Quiapo," consisting of paintings, sculpture, human hair embroidery, photographs and other artifacts belonging to the different families and denizens of the area. Quiapo residents who made it on opening night looked quite happy and proud to be there. The concept was interesting; perhaps, there may be something to holding an exhibit of the different suburbs of old Manila.

Present and accounted for were Gemma Cruz Araneta, who cut the ceremonial ribbon, with National Museum Director Cora Alvina. Irene Marcos Araneta was there with handsome son Alfonso, the spitting image of his grandfather. We saw Georgina Padilla who was in town to renew acquaintances with good friends Marylou Lovina, Linda Panlilio, Rita Ledesma, Butch Campos, Billy Abueva, Dr. Jaime Laya, Danny Dolor, and Peping and Chloe Periquet. Cez Manalo and other lovers of Quiapo arts and culture were also there.

* * *

Swiss Ambassador Dr. Werner Baumann and Mme. Susanne Baumann said farewell to their many friends at their Makati residence last week. The popular couple will certainly be missed. It's one of the hazards of the diplomatic life—so many goodbyes. Still, with the interconnectedness of the world and travel getting so much easier, there's no doubt it's merely *hasta pronto*—till we meet again.

* * *

Every Lenten season, Don Ado Escudero of Villa Escudero, following a tradition handed down by his parents, organizes the Good Friday procession complete with splendid carrozas and antique images that the family is justly famous for. This year was no exception. Thelma Gana was this year's *hermana mayor* while Nonong Guia the *hermano mayor*. There were both contemporary and antique images that paraded along the streets of San Pablo, magnificently dressed and bejewelled. The event certainly attracted both local and foreign tourists.

* * *

Keep your date book open for June 7 at 7:30 p.m. at the Santuario de San Antonio at Forbes Park for a benefit concert of classical arias and kundiman, "For the Love of San Antonio," with soprano Camille Lopez and the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra under Maestro Ruggero Baribieri. Call the parish office or Jasmine at 843-8830 for tickets.

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IBC chair and KBP president Cerge Remonde with SM's president Teresita Sy Coson

Book donation program benefits public schools

BOOKS were the focus on the recent launch of SM Foundation's "Donate a Book" project as project partners, DECS officials, donors, and recipients got together recently at the SM Megamall.

Currently ongoing until May 31 at all SM Supermalls, this book donation project is a partnership between SM Foundation and IBC, Radio Mindanao Network, KCFM 93.9 in Manila, XLFM 93.9 in Cebu and Davao, DWIC 95.1 in Iloilo, and HTFM 94.3 in Bacolod. Each donation entitles one to a cash coupon from the stationery department at all SM stores.

All donations will be turned over to public school libraries, day care centers, and municipal libraries all over the Philippines. This year's target areas will include Metro Manila, Pampanga, Kalinga, Ifugao, Benguet, Bicol, Laguna, Panay Island, Cebu, North Cotabato, Cagayan de Oro, and Davao.

Top broadcaster Jay Sonza and KCFM's popular DJs Chico and Delamar hosted the simple but inspiring program that launched the project. It began with a heartwarming rendition of "Our Father" and "The Prayer" by Kids of the Nation, a group of less fortunate children that wowed the crowd with their professional performance.

This was followed by a welcome address by SM Megamall mall manager Liza Selirio, and an overview of the "Donate a Book" project by SM Foundation's Lydia Echauz.

Among the very generous donors and representatives were Jean Fernandez of SD Publications, Lerma Ducay of the Fookien Times Yearbook, Julius Magno of JTW Corporation, Malou Fernandez of Rex Bookstore, Debbie Panzuelos of Regalong Pambahay, and Jeny Catabijan of St. Mary's Publication.

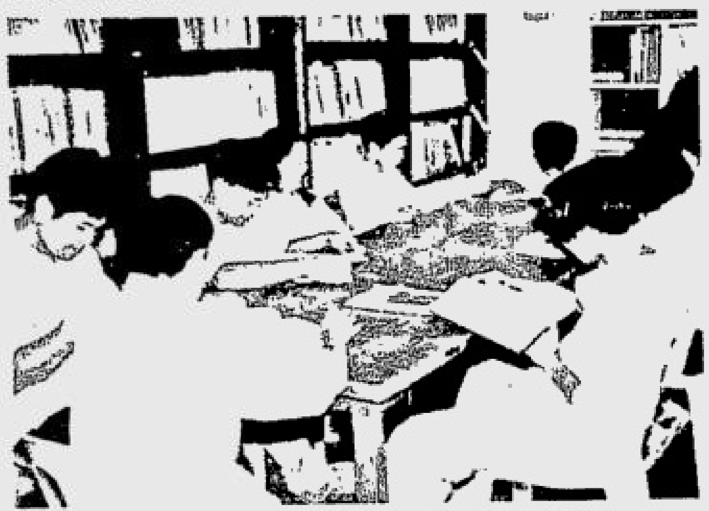
Beneficiaries expressed their appreciation. They included Taytay National High School principal Cynthia Cruz, Pampanga Provincial Capitol librarian Bessie Makabali, and students Jamicca de Mesa and Joshua Cano.

Teresita Inciong of the Department of Education delivered a special message.

The highlight of the event was the ribbon cutting ceremony participated in by IBC and KBP Chairman Cerge Remonde, RMN's vice president Bobby Ante and sales and marketing director Cris Hermosisima, DECS-NCR director Corazon Santiago, DECS official Teresita Inciong, Ceap's Neil Parinas, and SM Foundation's executive director Lydia Echauz.

Over the past four years, SM Foundation's "Donate a Book" project has collected over 1.6 million books which were distributed to over 4,000 public school and municipal libraries all over the Philippines.

LIBRARIAN Felicisima Narana of the E. Rodriguez Elementary School in Quezon City teaches Irish Blanco to use a donated dictionary.



THIRD Year high school students from Taytay National High School visit their library thrice a week for research using donated books.

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A romance of opposites

By Cora Llamas
Contributor

Repertory's production of 'Owl and the Pussycat' is an intellectual romance about an arrogant but emotionally deficient writer and a closet prostitute

REVIEW

ALVAREZ and Fabregas offstage. They're sweethearts in real life.
PHOTOS BY ROGER MARGALLO

MAYBE playwright Bill Manhoff didn't mean it that way, but Repertory Philippines' production of his "Owl and the Pussycat" starts and ends up as an intellectual romance, not just the classic clash of the ivory-tower nerd and the slinky low-class hooker. Were one to meet the characters in real life, there would probably very little to like about them. Felix is a know-it-all, wimpy pseudo-writer who looks down on other people simply because he doesn't have enough EQ to relate to them. Doris may be sexy, street-smart and pretty, but she's the nosy type who's not above peeking into other folks' diaries or butting into their well-ordered lives.

The beautiful irony in Manhoff's play is that it's Doris' privacy which gets needled first, triggering her whole love-hate relationship with Felix. Felix tattles off her secret prostitute lifestyle to their landlord who promptly evicts the girl. Doris gets sweet revenge by bunking inside Felix's apartment, whether he likes it or not.

Opposites

Manhoff's play goes beyond the usual scenario of two different characters who fall in love as they are forced to share the same space. Felix and Doris don't just differ like night and day—they're two complete opposites who, in close proximity, will end up either as best buddies or as corpses.

There's no middle ground. Doris' warm heart and instinctive grasp of human nature can either melt Felix's steel demeanor or scare him off. Meanwhile, Felix's high-handed intellectualism can shape Doris' limited vocabulary and lack of respectability, or totally turn her off.

PAOLO Fabregas

In this volatile situation, both characters alternate between coddling and cursing each other, leaving the audience to guess who, if any, will win in the end.

Leads Paolo Fabregas and Mirren Alvarez, two accomplished thespians who've done their fair share of more complex, classic dramatic pieces, expectedly attack the material with gusto. Under Michael Williams' direction, there's not a dead moment in the short two hours. Each character's repartee is immediately caught and swung back by his or her formidable adversary. Even when the dialogue gets a little wee vicious, there's enough affection and vulnerability shown to make the audience believe that there's more just animosity rigging the tension.

MIRREN Alvarez

The performers' dead-on approach and emotional versatility are more than enough to make up for the play's only limitation which, ironically, is the actors' own physicality. Fabregas and Alvarez make one handsome, intelligent, articulate couple. While this in itself is an asset, if only to create a powerful stage presence, there are scenes where it could have been a liability.

Cool Paolo

Fabregas could not help but exude a cool self-confidence that can sometimes dampen what should have been his character's insecurity. As he coldly struts off to work, ignoring Doris' attempts at reconciliation, he seems oh-so-in-control, a marble god not even deigning to look at his peon. In short, it can be difficult to imagine Fabregas' Felix as a weasel burrowing into libraries, afraid of human contact.

In the same way, it can be tough to see Alvarez' Doris as a working class, uneducated hooker, charming dirty old men for a few dollars a night. Even when she is cursing, the actress carries herself with a certain rare regal bearing that simply does not translate into inexpensive whoredom. It's not that Alvarez is stiff. On the contrary, she can be flighty, mischievous, flirtatious, and downright mean, but she still exude enough class to make the illiterate Doris appear like a princess who lost her birthright.

But these shortcomings (if one can call them that) are overlooked by the energy and wit that the actors put into their roles. Unlike some thespians or comics who only seem to mouth intelligent-sounding lines, Fabregas and Alvarez actually feel for their characters, and they do sound like they know what they're saying. While there's enough physical interplay to bring in the romance, it's actually the onstage mind-meld between the two that's fun to watch. The relationship swordplay is more intellectual and cerebral than emotional.

For all of Doris' lack of education and nipped literacy, Alvarez still makes her one bright girl who can't be intimidated by a few quotations from Shakespeare. Fabregas' occasionally appearing marble god also redeems itself during the climactic scenes. While he may not have been the resident nerd in high school, he must have been the cute egghead who had a sign plastered all over him: "I'm too good for you. Stay away." This makes extremely believable his botched suicide, motivated by an incredible desire to spite the world for not "understanding" him.

Bottomline, this particular "Owl and the Pussycat" plays at an angle different enough to be interesting.

(Repertory Philippines' "Owl and the Pussycat" runs at the RCBC Plaza, Makati from May 23-June 2. For details, call 633-4821.)

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9. Winners will be published in FOOD Magazine's July 2002 issue.
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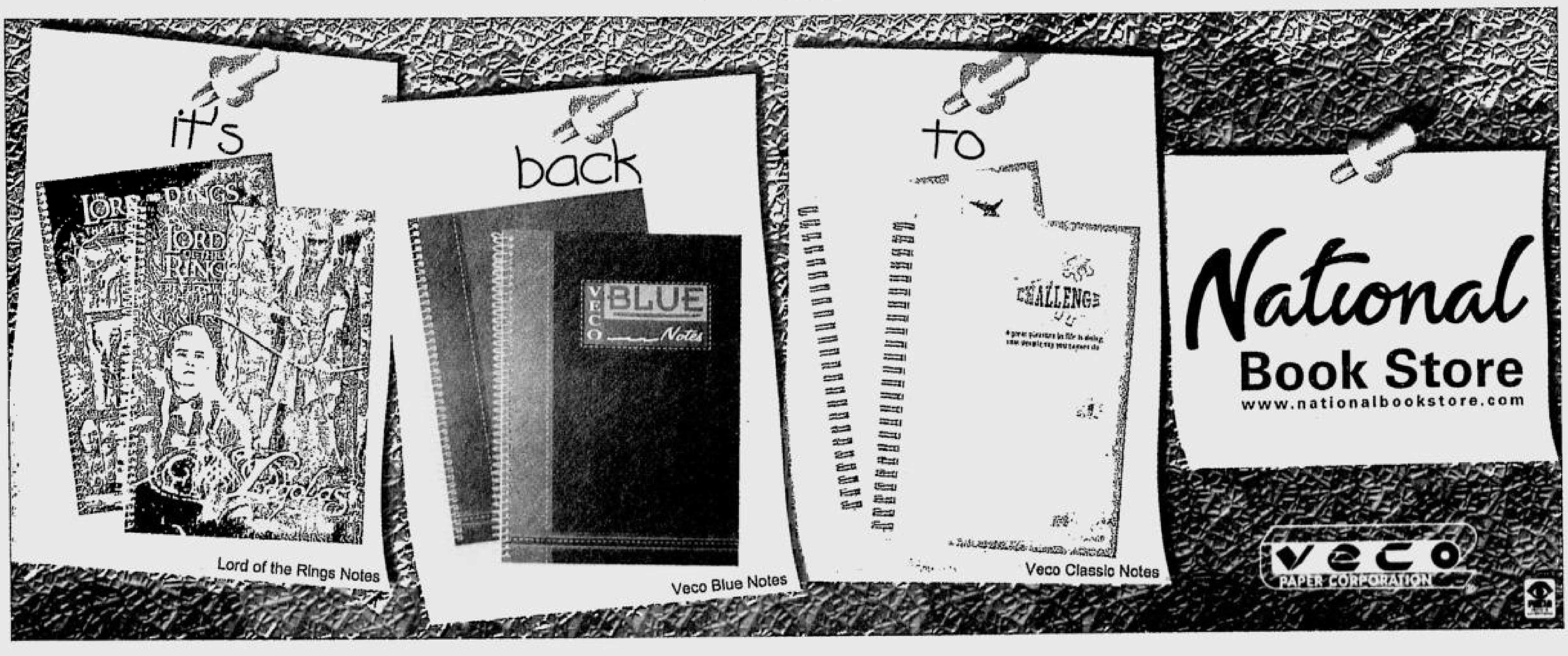

Piano bonding without ulterior motives

By Pablo Tariman
Contributor

QUITE a novelty in the local music scene is the gathering of pianists playing as duo, trio, quartet and, hold your breath, as many as 10 to 20 pianists on stage playing a piece for piano and more pianos.

In the mid-'70s in Legazpi City, I heard a trio from St. Scholastica play at St. Agnes Academy, and I thought, what camaraderie! Later, I found out that the budding musicians in college got bogged down by motherhood, but when their children were old enough to marry, they returned to the piano with a vengeance and were soon heard in various places playing Strauss waltzes and Mozart duos and trios.

In the '80s, I could not imagine these two pianists playing together. Both were prizewinners, both protégés of the former first lady, but under the glare of media scrutiny, they could not imagine themselves sharing the limelight.

But in the early '90s, after several years abroad, they came back as partners in a piano duo and were fairly well received.

At about that time, you heard of an Ivory Mafia composed of well-coifed ladies playing together from Manila to Tokyo and New York, and got as far as the Carnegie Hall. They led such charmed lives, these members of a piano circle, and they commanded quite a following because one was a former beauty queen, one was a wife of a diplomat, another was referred to as a legendary piano prodigy, and still another was a former New York scholar who used to be active in the ladies' circle of at least two symphony orchestras.

They had one thing in common, a passion for piano playing. But when they played, the passion was not so much on the playing but in the way they exerted so much effort to outshine the piano.

You've heard of this pianist who armed with a missionary zeal to unify all young and not so young artists, managed to recruit more than a platoon of musicians playing in one evening. Tickets were priced at P3,000 to P4,000 each and the souvenir programs cost P200.

Earlier, he was feverishly recruiting a celebrated pianist to join his piano platoon (all in the name of unifying Filipino artists). But his intentions were as clear as daylight: He needed a box-office attraction to sell his "unity" concert and, to hit two birds with one stone, he wanted to play a duo with this celebrated pianist as well and make it appear they were equal in stature (they weren't although both were known as prodigies in their youthful years).

INGRID Sala Santamaria (center) with Jonathan Coo and Pasig Vice Mayor Lorna Bernardo

He imagined that they would make good media copy, and woe to the other pianists who were clearly destined for cameo roles in the concert. A couple of days after the concert, Jullie Yap Daza reported 150 people attending a concert at the CCP Main Theater.

That is the kind of piano bonding based on ulterior motives, and not so much because somebody loved music so much. That somebody loved the limelight that much and loved to fantasize that the music world would be poorer without him. But when he stopped playing for a while (there was no international competition in sight), there was collective sigh of relief.

In the last five years, I've seen piano bonding of the sublime kind and a missionary spirit of the real kind, and there is no doubt mutual respect is a common denominator.

A perfect example of this is pianists Reynaldo Reyes and Ingrid Sala Santamaria, who are all set to invade the Banaue Rice Terraces and Villa Escudero in July. They loved music so much and wanted to share it with the poorest music lovers all over the country. The two are a perfect example of a sturdy mentor-pupil relationship based on respect.

Abroad, the bonding of Cecile Licad and Martha Argerich is another example of mutual respect. They could talk for hours on end until the wee hours of the morning, talking about their music, their loves, their children, so that one wonders why they haven't thought of a duo concert.

Last week, I heard pianists Mary Anne Espina, Najib Ismail and Jonathan Arevalo Coo at the Francisco Santiago Hall in a concert curiously titled "The Keyboard Quarrel."

The pianists are three of Manila's most sought-after assisting artists because, contrary to what their concert publicity connotes, they don't quarrel but actually collaborate endlessly. Playing Bach's Toccata in F Major and assisted by a string orchestra in the Bach and Mozart Concertos for Three Pianos, Coo, Espina and Ismail showed that artists need not quarrel and can actually produce better results if they work together—without ulterior motives.

Here and there

Viola player Gerry Varona, formerly with the Peace Philharmonic Philippines, qualified for a scholarship at the Interlochen Music Camp in Michigan. Among those who earlier made it to this music camp were violinist Joseph Esmilla and cellist Victor Michael Coo, who won a concerto competition in that august gathering of young musical talents.

Cebu City is not part of the national concert tour of Cecile Licad next month. She will be heard in six places, among them Laoag (June 22), Davao (June 26 under Bahaghari Productions), Tuguegarao City and Antipolo City. Her program: Schubert's Two Impromptus, Liszt's "Year of the Pilgrimage," Liszt-Busoni's Mephisto Waltz and Chopin's Twelve Etudes, Op. 25.

Meanwhile, conductor Rodel Colmenar is all set for a formal debut with the San Miguel Philharmonic with Cecile Licad as soloist on June 17 at the CCP Main Theater. Program includes Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3, Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony and Mozart's "Magic Flute" Overture. For tickets, call 687-3592 or 93.

Our condolences to the families of writers Lorna Revilla Montilla and Eric Catipon, who passed away last week. Lorna and I worked together at the BNFI shortly after martial law, while Eric always enlivened presscons at the CCP.

Smashing concertos perk up summer evening

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

The German envoy's residence becomes the perfect venue for a night of intimate music and bravura performance

THERE could not have been a more pleasurable moment of listening than the recently held concert of pianist Ingrid Sala Santamaria with pianist Jonathan Coo as collaborating artist. It impressed a select group of music lovers at the residence of German Ambassador Herbert D. Jess.

The venue was intimate and perfect for chamber music, not for the two concerti that made up the entire program.

Considering, however, that the rendition was made by two pianos, the modest receiving room was transformed into a concert hall that echoed with the engaging strains of two German composers: Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 in E Flat Major, Op. 73 ("Emperor"), and Schumann's Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 54.

Visual treat

Listening became more engaging, enriched by a visual treat with the paintings of Filipino artist Manuel Baldemor, which depicted a landscape of German architectural scenery.

The gracious ambassador prefaced the performance with a buoyant note about Philippine-German cultural relations, made real with the staging of artistic treats. He said that holding concerts in his residence is one sure way of enhancing understanding between the Philippines and Germany.

For this reason, he had to request his home government for a Grotian-Steinway piano, whose sound, as Ingrid sunk her fingers onto its keys, was certainly heavenly.

The performance was, indeed, a treat, perking up the enjoyment of summer. It was even a tour de force, considering the playing of two familiar piano concertos in one evening.

Listening to a concerto rendered by two pianos has merits one cannot get from listening to the usual norm of pitting the piano with an orchestra. In the former, one's imagination is made more active precisely by the very act of imagining the orchestration made by the composer, which is reduced for the second piano.

Even if the collaboration is well defined, the role of the collaborating pianist is more crucial than the "soloist," especially if such a soloist is a seasoned concert artist.

First there is the primary consideration of matching the soloist's tones and even temper. Musicality comes next, exuding the correct orchestral color and sound.

INGRID Sala Snatamaria

Jonathan Coo was a reliable collaborating pianist. Since playing with Santamaria during the Summer Festival organized by Pablo Tariman in Pasig City Last month, Jonathan has shown a much-relaxed stance, making his rendition enjoyable. In time he will gain the confidence that will enhance his playing.

He surged through the long introduction where Beethoven let the soloist enter at once, instead of the usual entrance done after an extended exposition. He matched the wit of the soloist in carrying the spirited dialogue Beethoven had masterly crafted between the piano and the orchestra.

Technical brilliance

As soloist, Ingrid played with verve and élan. She infused her playing with much sensitivity and technical brilliance.

She has transformed herself into an assertive, confident performer, chiseling lush, articulate nuances and liberated tones. She played the "Emperor" with such audacity and clear dispatch, eloquently etching the well-tempered nuance of the classical import of the piece. The nobility and majesty of the piece was well projected. The first movement reeled off with compelling grandeur and exuberance, contrasted with a hymn-like second movement, and capped with a playful third movement.

This concerto has a tremendous significance for Ingrid. She had her debut as a concert pianist with this piece in 1962 with the then National Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of the late Redentor Romero.

It is said that Schumann's piano concerto is the direct successor to Beethoven's piano concertos in the sense, that like Beethoven's piano concertos, its cadenza is not written as a vehicle to show the soloist's technical as well as virtuoso ability.

More important, it is written as a poetic interlude for the solo instrument. Moreover, the soloist shares with the orchestra the delineation of the thematic material.

Ingrid was in complete abandon in dishing out this orientation which Schumann had clothed the piano concerto with. Her playing was truly absorbing.

She essayed the first movement with a solid dispatch, etching the cadenza with an engaging Bacchian appeal. She kept the audience rapturous in the second movement, as she dished out the song-like movement, always keeping the congenial dialogue between her and the collaborating pianist. As in the Beethoven concerto, the second movement proceeded to the last movement without pause. Here Ingrid played the complex rhythmic demands without letup, and revealed some arresting passages in the extended, discursive coda.

Gracious host

We commend Ambassador Jess and his wife for their graciousness in hosting a truly enjoyable evening of German concertos interpreted by Filipino pianists. We hope to see more musical performances in the ambassador's residence, featuring more of the country's musical talents in the days to come.

Meanwhile, we shall look forward to the slated romantic journey of pianists Reynaldo G. Reyes and Ingrid Sala Santamaria this July. The journey will start in Alabang, then go to Cavite, Batangas, Laguna and Quezon, before it stretches all the way up to Banaue, Baguio, Laoag, Agoo, La Union, Dagupan, and winds up at Concert at the Park in Luneta.

No less than six piano concertos composed by Beethoven, Grieg, Rachmaninoff, Saint-Saens, Schumann and Tchaikovsky had been lined up for this musical odyssey.

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New play from New Voice tackles AIDS

THE NEW Voice Company, fresh from its tremendously successful staging of "Kababaihan—A Gala Benefit Performance of 'The Vagina Monologues'," announces the mounting of "Falsettos," another innovative and powerful theatrical musical. The Tony Award-winning musical by William Finn and James Lapine, tackles love, AIDS and family.

Meet Marvin. He's married to Trina, devoted to 12-year-old Jason, his son, and in love with a man named Whizzer. Marvin leaves his wife and young son for his male lover, while his psychiatrist, Mendel, moves in with his wife. At the end of Act 1, he is left with nothing except the possibility of a relationship with his son who is no longer terrified of growing up just like Dad.

Heading the cast are theater stalwarts Jake Macapagal as the unlikely hero Marvin, Joel Trinidad as his dying lover Whizzer, and theater and concert artist Lynn Sherman as Trina. Playing Mendel is NVC resident actor and associate artistic director Rito Asilo, while the lesbian couple from next door are played by exciting new actresses Lily Chu and Jenny Jamora. Vying for the role of 12-year-old Jason are new theater finds Joshua de Arellano and Marco Aytona.

"Falsettos" goes onstage at the Music Museum on June 28-Aug. 3. Direction and choreography by NVC associate artistic director Andrew Vergara, assistant direction and stage management by NVC resident director Rabbi Gannaban, musical direction by Bond Samson, set design and execution by Denis Lagdameo, production management by Lisa Santos, vocal musical direction by Luningning San Jose, artistic direction by Monique Wilson with Rossana Abueva and Teresa Wilson as executive producers.

"Falsettos" is open to show/block buying and corporate sponsorships. It is produced in cooperation with Music Museum, the NVC Actors Studio, and Samuel French Inc. New York. Call 896-4695/5497 or 899-0630 (telefax), or e-mail nvcpost@ hotmail.com or nvc@pacific. net.ph.

JAKE Macapagal stars as "Marvin".

LYNN Sherman stars as "Trina".

JOEL Trinidad stars as "Whizzer".

Ballet recitals at RCBC Plaza

MARITONI Rufino-Tordesillas, directress of Danspace, and Mylene Saldana, directress of Turning Point School of Ballet, will hold their first grand recital entitled "Duo" at the RCBC Plaza on May 28 at 6 pm. Aptly titled "Duo," the production is a reunion of two former ballerinas of the Philippine Ballet Theater who once shared the stage, dancing many memorable roles.

After 10 years, they share the stage once more, this time as ballet teachers showcasing the talents of their students. "Duo" will open with the wedding scene from the "Sleeping Beauty" and will end with excerpts from favorite Walt Disney themes set to ballet. Lending support and inspiration are guest artists Jared Tan, Tara Ferrer and Sydney Ignacio from the Philippine Ballet Theatre, and Nina Habulan.

Kundiman concert slated at Manila Cathedral

"A NIGHT of Kundiman,'" slated at the Manila Cathedral on June 8, 8 p.m., is "intended to raise funds for singers and musicians who need help for their medication, hospitalization or burial and other expenses," said its organizers, led by radio-TV director Heidi O. Sison.

Former Civil Service commissioner Corazon Alma de Leon is coordinating the affair which will be open to the public.

Sison, who hosts the popular "Direk Heidi" program over dwWW, said that "A Night of Kundiman" was broached by Sylvia La Torre and other singers during the wake for Diomedes Maturan. Other details for the show are being fleshed out by members of the Organisasyon ng Pilipinong Mangaawit. Call 426-2983.

German jazz musicians in Manila

THE GOETHE-INSTITUT Inter Nationes Manila invites Philippine jazz fans to a concert with the Günter Adler Quartet at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Central Bank Building, Roxas Blvd, on May 29 at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free. Call 722-4671 to -73 for reservations.

If the modern beat of a large city like Berlin had a name, it would be "Günter Adler." Four young, extremely talented and creative German jazz musicians have united to form this extraordinary quartet: Rudi Mahall (bass clarinette), Daniel Erdmann (saxophone), Johannes Fink (bass) and Heinrich Kobberling (drums). Do not just think of melodies, they play them—temperamental, floating, and at the pulse.

Günter Adler Quartet contains the finest musicians playing in the international jazz and improvised music scene today. They form a new shape of jazz with open-minded interplay and sounds of the moment. Each concert is a unique adventure.

What does the press say about them?

"Jazz in a new light...a more than extraordinary debut!" (the Fono Forum)

"The four from Berlin have found a unique style. Congratulations!" (Jazz Podium)

"The fresh wind from Berlin that makes fun to listen to, Günter Adler" (Nürnberger Nachrichten)

"The reed players are fabulous; playing the greatest dynamics. Erdmann plays wonderful melodies, answered by Mahall in a dialectic way." (Tagesspiegel)

Recently the group produced a CD under the label of Metarecords, focusing on jazz music of the '60s.

On May 30 at 8 p.m., Günter Adler will have a jamming session with the Mayam Jazz Trio at the Goethe-Institut (687 Aurora Boulevard, Quezon City). Everybody is invited.

There will also be a jazz concert at the Sanctum/Intramuros on May 31 and July 1 with Jens Thomas (piano) and Christoph Lauer (saxophone) taking center stage, also sponsored by the Goethe-Institut.

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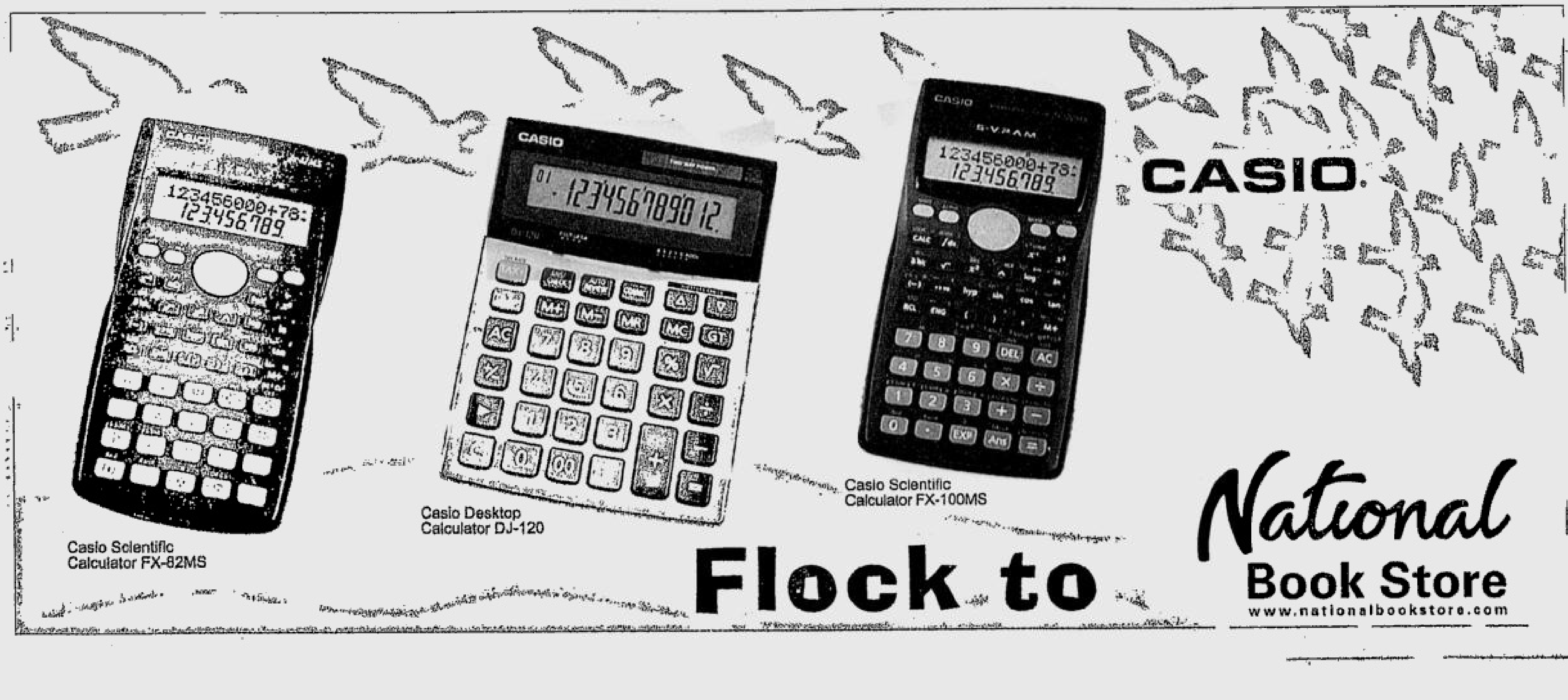

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'Batang West Side' and history in cinema

By Vinita Ramani
Contributor

The Singapore Film Festival best picture winner deserves to be seen by a wider audience, both inside and outside the Philippines

THERE are possibly two immediate statements that can be made about Filipino director Lav Diaz's film "Batang West Side," which recently screened in competition at the 15th Singapore International Film Festival, and went on to win Best Film at the festival's Silver Screen Awards. Firstly, its five-hour duration demonstrates an intriguing exercise in a new aesthetics for cinema in our region, and not merely in the Philippines. Secondly, the film is a subtle intersection of personal memory and history. The narrative seems to suggest that, for a nation to confront how it has been complicit in creating its history, its people need to confront their collective past. If this is in many ways at the core of Diaz's film, then it presents urgent questions to both Filipinos and those of us who live elsewhere in Southeast Asia. It certainly begins to ask us how we perceive our collective identity and what we know of our history.

The director's previous films, "Kriminal ng Baryo Concepcion" (1998) and "Hubad sa Ilalim ng Buwan" (1999) demonstrated a proclivity for just this type of confrontation. In Diaz's films, people under duress reap extraordinary realizations precisely by facing the predicament at hand, be it the farmer in "Kriminal" or the former Catholic priest played by Joel Torre in "Hubad." In a similar sense, "Batang West Side" does not presume to address all the ailments ailing the Filipino community, nor does it does prescribe an easy redemption. It only indicates that difficult situations force us to ask difficult questions of ourselves. The strength of the film lies in its capacity to avoid didacticism, even as it compels its audience to be self-reflexive.

YUL Servo as Hanzel Harana, whose murder sets off an inquiry into the Filipino soul.

The film's aesthetic scope also furthers the idea that "Batang West Side" is not merely an exercise in elaborate narrative. It is primarily shot in the winter streets of Jersey City, revealing a stark and clinical desolation, contrasted by warm but imposing interiors, which do not feel like "home," merely like houses. Jersey City images are contrasted with black and white shots of dream sequences in the Philippines. They hint at the past and bear a cryptic symbolism that lends greater tension to the film. Diaz stated that he used methods to "dirty" the footage and give the film's texture a roughened appearance, all of which make the film both visually and intellectually compelling.

Its premise is the death of Hanzel Harana, a young Filipino immigrant freshly arrived in America. Jersey City police detective Juan Mijarez, played with masterful subtlety by Torre, is handed the case under investigation. On one level his encounter with the situation unravels a troubling personal history and the history of the Philippines itself. On another level, the case reveals stories about the various people who were either distantly or closely involved with him.

Triumph

The film has been noted as a triumph in ensemble acting and this is evidenced by how each individual's story becomes a piece in the collage that typifies the problems of the Filipino immigrant community. One of the characters Bartolo, played by Arturo Acuna, questions the idea of integrity posited by Hanzel's mother by asking her if it is driven by good conscience or guilt. This question resonates throughout the film so that every character is in one way or another forced to ask it.

The characters are beset with interesting and painful contradictions. Foremost of these is Hanzel's mother (Gloria Diaz) who marries an American in the hope of providing opportunities for her children in a seemingly better place. Her husband Gordon's physical disability and the difficult dynamics between herself and her boarder Bartolo place her in a subservient situation, despite her apparent wealth and comfort. The other is, of course, Juan Mijarez himself. If Lav Diaz has a penchant for investigating the soul under duress he also shows a capacity to humanize the bleakest of souls in those situations. Mijarez's past reveals his role in the Marcos regime and it is no small irony that he now finds himself trying to "right a wrong" by investigating the death of a Filipino youth. Diaz opts to avoid identifying Mijarez as a "perpetrator," instead giving his character greater depth and emotional complexity.

The process peels back layer after layer in demonstrating how everyone is complicit in Hanzel's death. From the myth of the American dream, to the trade in shabu, "the drug of the Filipinos," which is exported out of the Philippines, the film conveys a profound sense of irony through the situation its characters find themselves in. The specific identity of the murderer ceases to be the key question in the film and Hanzel's death becomes a powerful metaphor for the attack on the Filipino soul.

There is an even more personal statement in this film found in the shape of a documentary filmmaker. He befriends Mijarez in the process of doing a film on West Side Avenue and Hanzel's death. A discerning connection is drawn between the investigation process, which requires testimonies from witnesses, and a documentary filmmaker who uses the medium as a way of playing witness to narratives. Diaz does not avoid suggesting explicitly that filmmaking—rather than existing for profit or entertainment alone—may bear a political responsibility in seeing and transmitting the stories found in its cultural landscape.

This does not mean filmmaking has to be subordinated to emotional outpouring or telling the "truth." The film's structure discloses that this "truth" does not exist and in its place are the subjective stories of a people. "Batang West Side" has an emotional resonance outside of the cultural context it addresses because ultimately, Diaz's preoccupation with the human soul reveals itself as central to the film. For that reason alone, it deserves to be seen by a wider audience, both inside and outside the Philippines.

The author is a Singapore writer and the former publicist for the Singapore International Film Festival

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AN INTERVIEW WITH LAV DIAZ

Saving the Filipino soul through film

By Raymond Lee
Contributor

THE PHILIPPINES won the top prize at the recently concluded 15th Singapore International Film Festival with a film that was rejected at last year's Metro Manila Film Festival and which so far remains unsuccessful at getting itself distributed anywhere in the country.

The most obvious reason for such a glaring—though in these parts not entirely unusual—oversight is the film's running time. Clocking in at five hours, Lav Diaz's "Batang West Side" is the longest Southeast Asian film ever made. Interestingly, when Diaz picked up the Best Film award in Singapore on April 25 he came up with the evening's shortest acceptance speech: "Thank you."

Later, during this interview, he admitted to having wanted to say a little more.

How do you feel about winning?

I've been suffering for six years for this film. Winning is just part of the process—the process of healing, after dying, doing your work. I hope [winning this award] will increase the film's chances of finally getting released in my country.

While you were onstage to pick up the Best Film award for "Batang West Side" you simply said "Thank you," but it seemed to me like you wanted to say something more.

(Laughs) Yes. Actually, I wanted to say something in Filipino. I wanted to say: *Para ito sa Pilipino, para sa aking bayan, para sa pelikulang Pilipino. Maraming dapat baguhin sa kaawa-awa kong bayan. 'Yon ang sinasabi ng* "Batang West Side" (This is for the Filipino, for my country, for Philippine cinema. A lot needs to be changed in my pitiful country. That is what "Batang West Side" is about).

How do people usually react when they learn that your film is five hours long?

For many [length] is an issue. A huge issue, and a headache to many here in the Philippines. But [it's] not an issue if we remember that there are small and large canvases; brief ditties and lengthy arias; short stories and multi-volume novels; the haiku and "The Iliad." This should be the end of the argument.

[They say] it's too long, people can't take it; it's too heavy, people can't handle it; distributors won't pick it up, theaters won't screen it. Wrong. There are theaters that will accept this film. People will watch long films. I believe the masses have the ability to transcend the standards they normally use in apprehending the arts.

Allow works of proportion and beauty to exist, and we will develop an audience with lofty enough and profound enough philosophies to properly appreciate the art of cinema. People will watch and enjoy "Batang West Side."

I have seen "Batang West Side" twice, and I think it is a terrific film. But not many people have seen it, and maybe that's why it's better known as The Long Film. When you set out to do this film did you think it was going to run for five hours?

No. I never intended to make "Batang West Side" five hours long. I simply followed the cutting and joining together of various scenes according to the script I shot. The original script titled "West Side Avenue, JC"—which won a Palanca in 1997—was 135 pages long, with 126 scenes. A revised copy that I shot reached a hundred pages and 208 scenes.

I thought the film would run three hours, but during editing I saw that it would run longer I didn't try to alter this condition; I allowed it to flow naturally. I allowed it to become organic, to acquire a life of its own; this is my philosophy when cutting, when finishing a film. I don't bend to the conventions of editing, or of length; I refused to follow the dictates of industry. No manipulation has been done to force me to conform to tradition, to what has been done before. I've studied the length many times in order to change it, but the five-hour version remains solid—according to the dictates of aesthetics, story flow and wholeness of vision. I refuse to compromise the integrity of the work to please limiting, emasculating "tradition."

My principle for doing art is very organic. I don't believe in manipulating things too much. I let the work define itself especially during postproduction. I let the work flow, find its own rhythm.

This is contra to the Hollywood paradigm, which is all about commerce, all about pleasing the audience. Entertainment for the audience; profit for the many producers, directors, actors, film workers and movie theater owners.

And this is the very problem of Philippine cinema—using Hollywood as a model, [where] every five minutes in the movie something has to happen. That is why the Filipino's appreciation of cinema is shallow and base. In their eyes, cinema is no different from a carnival. It will take a long and involved process to change this perception, especially with Hollywood films still dominating Filipino theaters. But you have to destroy that [perception] to create a new cinema.

Why does the Philippines need a new cinema?

Cinema in Asia started in the Philippines in 1901, but now we are 50 years behind in all the new movements of cinema, including Asian cinema. Because of Hollywood disorientation, because of passiveness and fear of progressing. We have very irresponsible filmmakers, producers, actors. We also have an irresponsible audience.

Cinema, the arts—these play an important role in changing people's perspectives. So artists have to be responsible. Sometimes I wonder how those filmmakers sleep (after) doing trash movies.

In the '50s we had Gerry de Leon, Lamberto Avellana, Manuel Conde. In the '70s, Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Mike de Leon. We have to go back to these people's ideals.

LAV Diaz (left) at work

We need courage to innovate and create. We need to begin developing a National Cinema, a cinema that will help create a responsible Filipino people.

Through cinema we can save the Filipino soul. That's my thesis. With bad cinema... we all go to hell.

"Batang West Side" touches on different periods of Philippine history. What is the reason behind this?

We (Filipinos) have to confront our past as a people: the 300 years of Spanish colonization, the hundred years of US dominance, the four years of Japanese rape, the 24 years of Marcos terrorism. We're a people with no memory, and here we are now. Imelda [Marcos] is still dancing.

Mijarez, the cop character in the film, is based on real people—people who tortured and killed the brightest of Filipino youth during Marcos' martial law; people who are now important politicians in our country and who actually have a good chance of becoming president one day.

The whole canvas of "Batang West Side" is a canvas of our collective guilt as a people. We're killing our country. All Filipinos are guilty of killing the nation.

Still, your film ends on a hopeful note.

Yes, and [with] a question to all Filipinos: Can we do this? Can we confront our past?

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When it comes to Back-to-School must-haves,

RAFAEL Roco and Hilda Koronel, the star-crossed lovers in "Maynila"

The legacy . . .

From page F1

performances: the moving realism of Rafael Roco, the brilliance of Hilda Koronel, and the ensemble acting that never made a false note.

All of these elements were effectively woven in a narrative that remains one of the most wrenching in cinema history. Based on Edgardo M. Reyes' Liwayway-serialized novel, Clodualdo del Mundo Jr. wrote a screenplay that contained the stock characters of Philippine contemporary drama. To be sure, Reyes had really intended his novel to be a parable; that could be gleaned from the idealized and allusive names of the characters. But it was the movie's strength that the original material's predictability had been transformed into something forceful and inevitable. If "Maynila" were oral history, it would be a history rendered alive by a minstrel's creativity. It was a movie that made a myth out of the direst, somewhat predictable reality of the city, transforming it into something commanding and even more real. Its riches up to now remain inexhaustible.

Chamber drama

If "Maynila" is epic, "Insiang" is chamber drama of the sociological sort. It set the stage for Brocka's masterful character studies such as "Jaguar" and "Bona", and it remains the most successful. The realism here is "documentarist", surprising for a small movie that somehow approximates the claustrophobic force of a Greek tragedy with its lofty speech and august stylization. With its initial sequence of pigs being slaughtered and its climax that puts a bloody close to a sordid story of quasi-incest, "Insiang's" tragic realism doesn't miss a beat.

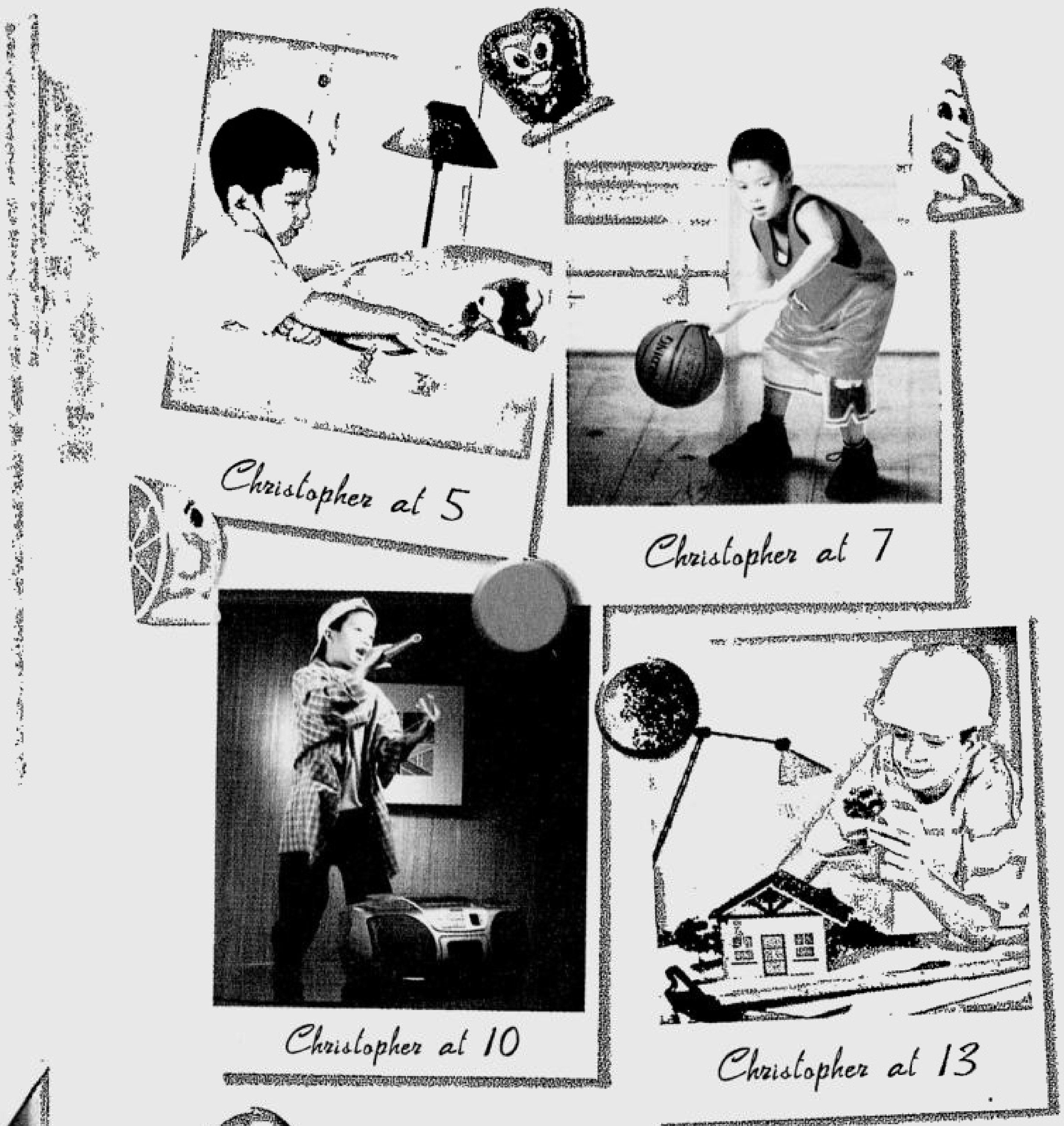
With his social consciousness, it was only a matter of time for Brocka to become a political activist. "Orapronobis" (OPN) was perhaps his most political movie. I would have preferred for any of his movies between "Insiang" and OPN to have made it to the list to show the evolution of his style and the trajectory of his concerns (I would have preferred the inclusion, for example, of "Kapit sa Patalim," which I voted for, in fact, instead of OPN).

Without that bridge, one learns how Brocka toward the end of his career had become bitter and frustrated about a nation that seemed fated to commit collective suicide. It couldn't have been otherwise. How could one explain a people that overthrew a military dictatorship only to find themselves at the mercy of twisted militia forces whose bloodthirsty activities were encouraged and sponsored by military goons?

As a political statement, OPN worked, but as a piece of artistic truth, it failed. While purporting to present a true picture of the human rights situation under the Aquino government, it played too cavalierly with the facts, presenting a merry muddle of events that had wobbly historical bases. Brocka and his team were only too inclined to smear the government, and it got funding from foreign sources to do so. It was a movie consumed by its own hate and weighed down by its ideological baggage. Ultimately, it was a cynical movie.

But the images of OPN remain scorching and memorable. The late Conrado Baltazar, Brocka's favorite cinematographer, achieved sublime realism with his shots of the Tulio Favali-like priest driving his scooter across a phantasmagoric mist that portended his death in the hands of the anti-communist cult Orapronobis; of the boy (R.R. Herrera) tugging at his mother (Gina Alajar) in fear at the sight of the dreaded militia; and of the former political prisoner (Philip Salvador) carrying the lifeless body of his son in his arms. These images are haunting, composed by a hurting and human artistic sensibility. His last movies might have grated too politically, but again and again, Brocka never faltered in his humanity.

The CCP pays tribute to Lino Brocka on May 22, with a Mass at 5:30 p.m. at the Little Theater lobby, followed by an exhibit of the director's film posters, books, trophies and filmography, and the showing of two documentary videos. At 8 p.m., "Maynila...Sa Mga Kuko ng Liwanag" will be screened. Call 832-5120 or 832-1125 locals 1704 to 05.



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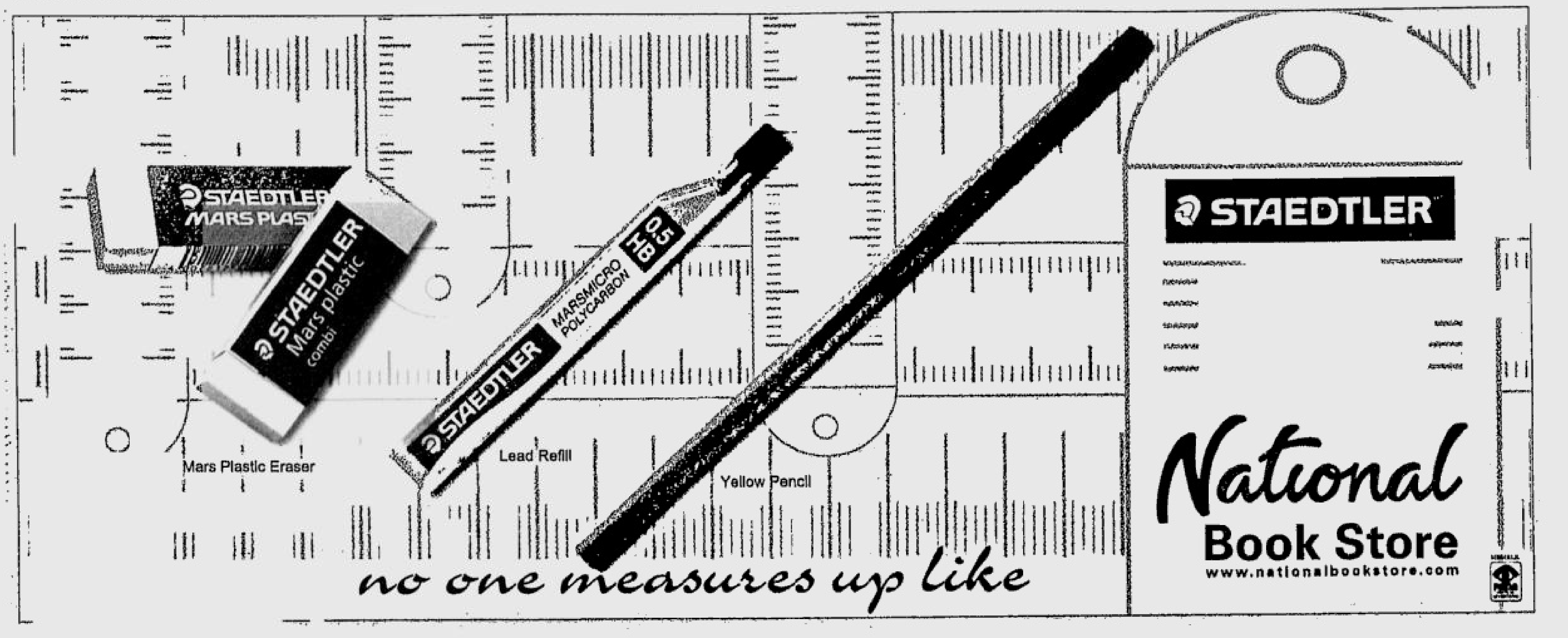

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Hatid ni Normandale sa Montessori, Merville, Parañaque

Kasal nina Lani Cacho at Nestor Pamintuan sa Santo Domingo Church, Quezon Boulevard

Date nina Amy Javier at Jay Agustin sa may E. Rodriguez

Binyag ni Gabriel de Veyra sa Our Lady of Annunciation Parish, Mindanao Avenue

Pamamalengke nina Lola Viring at Celia sa Malolos Public Market, Bulacan

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